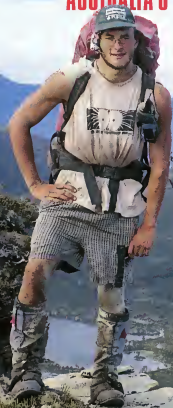


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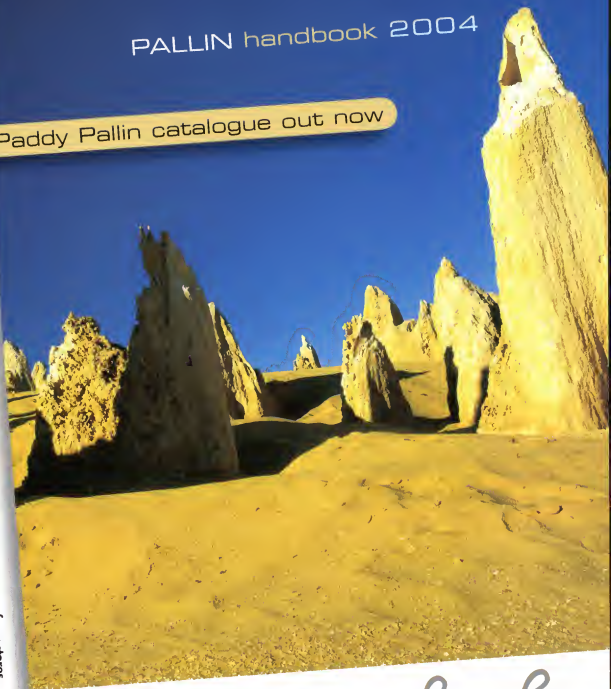
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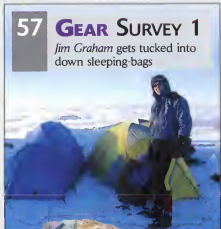
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Cover Pete Wallis high over Pigsty Ponds, Southwest Tasmania. See report on page 17. Pete Wallis collection

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Established 1981

WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.



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Tasmanian forest practices

A national governance- and international heritage issue

'Those who do not learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.'

George Santayana

NOTWITHSTANDING THE IRONY OF ITS ENORMOUS power as a marketing emblem for things supposedly 'natural' and unpolluted—from Tasmanian tourism to Hobart beer—the thylacine (Tasmanian tiger) has become what internationally acclaimed Tasmanian novelist Richard Flanagan has described as a 'symbol of our feckless ignorance and stupidity'.

In 1886 the Tasmanian Government introduced a government bounty for killing what is now Tasmania's *de facto* State emblem. The decision on the bounty was won by the narrowest possible majority despite a complete lack of evidence—then or now—that thylacines posed a significant threat to sheep, and replaced a succession of private bounty schemes established by pastoralists. Extinction was complete within just 50 years. (The last known thylacine died in 1936 in Hobart Zoo.) In his 2003 book *Thylacine* David Owen describes the 1886 Act as follows:

The thylacine thus fell, victim of outrageous statistical exaggeration, blatant untruths and the buying of the racist vote. The power and influence of a political group—wealthy land-owners—won the day over reasoned consideration. Facts did not matter...this symbol of the untamed island had been sentenced to death...That Tasmanians were unable to save it from extinction—that they did not even try until well into the twentieth century—eventually spread an enormous pall of guilt, regret and sorrow. The thylacine's demise left a terrible legacy...

Tasmania's next test grew out of belated efforts to protect the thylacine. Again, powerful (and subsequently discredited) commercial interests prevailed with the government over good sense and the long-term public interest. This time the resource was water rather than sheep, and the vested interests not pastoralists but the notorious Hydro-Electric Commission. Although now relegated to a backwater, in the 1960s and 1970s it was a power-driven behemoth. Lake Pedder was at the heart of a proposed wilderness reserve that the State's Fauna Board had originally sought for the

thylacine. They were not able to find any and the South-West Committee subsequently lobbied for the reserve in a much enlarged form. The Tasmanian Government's ignorance of what was at stake is sadly evident in this 1966 comment by Tasmanian Premier Eric Reece, quoted in the *Hobart Mercury*, '... the south-west [has] "a few badgers, kangaroos and wallabies, and some wild flowers that can be seen anywhere"'. Despite opposition from around the world, the unique and exquisitely beautiful Lake Pedder was drowned six years later by the HEC for its Gordon dam. Most of the dam cannot be used to generate power. It is a huge, watery platform to lift the inflow stream across to the Gordon River. At most the Gordon dam generates a negligible 60 megawatts of

power. (Victoria's LaTrobe valley generates 17 000.)

As Owen puts it in *Thylacine*, Lake Pedder 'remains the other vivid symbol of the triumph of vested economic interests over environmental considerations'.

Having twice disastrously failed its own people and the wider community—contemporary and future—by destroying the thylacine and Lake Pedder, Tasmania is once more heading down the same one-way road. Again, the Tasmanian Government is a key player. This time the commercial interests are the timber industry in general, and Tasmania's first billion-dollar company, the Launceston timber company Gunns, in particular. The resource is wood, or more precisely Tasmania's remaining old-growth

**“ Tasmanian Government...
has killed off its animal symbol,
drowned its iconic lake, and
now appears determined to
clear-fell its trade-mark forests!”**



Managing Editor Chris Baxter in the heart of the Tasmanian wilderness, on Mt Oakleigh. Sue Baxter



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Managing Editor, Director Chris Baxter OAM
editorial@wild.com.au

Advertising & Marketing Director

Stephen Hamilton

advertising@wild.com.au

Associate Editor Megan Holbeck

editorialadman@wild.com.au

Sub-editor Mary Harber

Subscriptions Tony Cox

mailorder@wild.com.au

Accounts Fiona Jenkins

accounts@wild.com.au

Design & production Bruce Godden

production@wild.com.au

Consultant Brian Walters SC

Special Advisers

Stephen Buntin, John Chapman, Andrew Cox,

Grant Dixon, Geoff Law,

Roger Lembit, David Noble

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All correspondence to:

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forests. And again, as with Lake Pedder, the unions and compliant local media have swung in behind this alliance.

The twin driving forces of the ensuing record levels of destruction are wood-chips and the conversion of vast swathes of native forest to plantations. Tasmania exports more than twice the volume of native forest wood-chips than all the other States combined, and more than 10 000 hectares of Tasmanian native forest are being converted to plantations every year. Tasmania is the only State still flagrantly clearing and wood-chipping rainforest. After being clear-felled, areas of mixed rainforest and old-growth forest are burnt. Native animals that might eat plantation seedlings suffer slow deaths after eating poisoned carrots laid for this purpose. Cleared land then becomes plantations that are cheaper to harvest and have shorter growth cycles. The forests in question form the eastern edge of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and include the Styx, Weld, Picton, Huon, Florentine and Derwent valleys, as well as the Tarkine and other forests.

The age-old triad of money, power and influence is at the root of the matter. Just as there was no market for the HEC's bulk 'cheap power', Tasmanian forestry practice is not about meeting market needs for timber. It's about short-term gain for a few, about making excessive fortunes for corporate interests from unsustainable forestry practices. Nor is it about jobs. The number of people said to be employed in the Tasmanian forestry industry fluctuates between 3200 and 10 000 but only a fraction of them are employed in logging old-growth forests. Tasmania's economic utopia wasn't found on the sheep's back or in the HEC's 'cheap power' for industry that never came and it won't be found by chipping Tasmania's old-growth forests for Japanese tissues and replacing them with monoculture plantations to be 'harvested' at regular cycles by labour-saving machines. The potential for old-growth forests to earn tourist- and recreational dollars for Tasmania is much greater than the short-term economic 'benefits' from clear-felling. In a world where such resources are increasingly scarce, Tasmania's economic future clearly lies in a credible 'clean green' image.

Were Tasmanian Government shares on the market, the astute investor would be unwise to invest in them. Management has killed off its animal symbol, drowned its iconic lake, and now appears determined to clear-fell its trade-mark forests!

The contradiction between how Tasmania is marketed and how tourists are now finding it is attracting international attention. Closer to home, on 13 March 10 000 people gathered in Hobart to call for an end to clear-felling Tasmania's old-growth forests.

Clear-felling old-growth forests for wood-chipping accelerated dramatically in the late 1990s after the two major parties struck a deal to alter the political system radically, decimating the minority parties. A former Liberal Premier is a director of Gunns, the present Liberal Opposition leader once worked for them, and the present Labor



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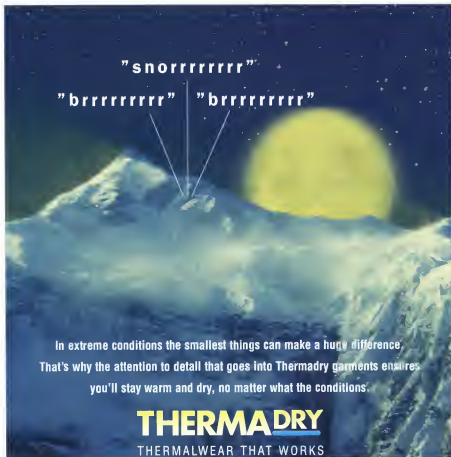
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Premier, a former unionist, openly supports Gunns as Tasmania's biggest employer. The clear-felling of Tasmania's old growth forests is at odds with the wishes of a majority of Tasmanians according to a report into the issue. In a recent *Four Corners* programme on ABC Television the logging was described as being about 'the fate of a national asset now in the hands of an industry that is self-regulated, self-serving and unaccountable'.

The notorious 'cone of silence' maintained by Forestry Tasmania over logging practices in the State received a blow last year when Bill Manning, a former forests practices manager, was subpoenaed to appear before a Senate committee. As the *Age* reported on 13 March:

Manning became the first insider to allege broadscale illegal destruction of public forest... He cited more than 80 examples of alleged breaches of fauna protection provisions...and said no action was taken, despite his complaints.


Instead, he said, the industry was allowed to regulate itself, starving the Government of information in a culture of 'bullying, cronyism, secrecy and lies'.

According to a report in *Habitat*, Manning was removed from his position.

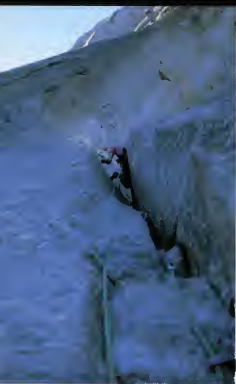
But for all the appalling destruction which, in the words of an article by Martin Flanagan in Melbourne's *Age* on 15 March, means 'Tasmania's physical character is being altered' this is not merely an environmental matter. Tasmania is the basket case of Australian—make that developed-world—democracy. As Flanagan puts it his article, what is happening in Tasmania is not...

...simply a Green issue. This is an issue of good government.

The answer to the vexed question of forest usage surely lies in some notion of balance. Within Tasmania, there now appears to be no mechanism balancing the public interest against the ravenous appetite of a company enjoying unprecedented wealth and power, much of which derives from publicly owned wildlands.

Just as Federal intervention was necessary with the Tasmanian Government's intention to flood the Franklin River, it is again time for the rest of Australia—and the world—to intervene in the interests of both our natural heritage and of democracy. Unfortunately, the old political parties are unlikely to lead the way. It is up to the concerned Australian public to see that they do; by raising public awareness, by the use of our vote, and by economic pressure on Gunns, its major investors including the Commonwealth Bank, and on Tasmania for selling itself to the world as 'The Natural State' when, in truth, 'The Self-destructing State' is nearer the mark. 


Chris Baxter
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I WOULD HAVE TO AGREE TO KEEP DOGS OUT of our National Parks, more specifically those that are designated remote or wilderness areas...they're an introduced species, but then, so are we and so are dingoes—and if you really want to go back, so are Aborigines.

I think the real issue is that most of those who object only see the urbanised doggies whose masters don't bother to pick up their you know whats, and other behaviour, and pigeon-hole them all as irresponsible owners, whether in National Parks...dogs don't do as much damage as cats to the ecosystem (I can see a few incoming hate mails here) as long as the owner is responsible for their actions and their dogs, but how can one police that?

My gripe is that I have annoying neighbours who let their dogs bark continuously, which works wonders for my sleep habits. I'd rather not see a dog or any sort of introduced species when I go trekking in the wilds because I like to get away from it all...

Matt Smith
Corimal, NSW

'Hello dog lovers'

I have only two words to say to you; introduced species. Yes, I know humans don't belong in the environment either, but at least many of them are trying to reduce their impact. On the other hand, taking Rover into the bush, or on to the beach, hardly fulfils this aim. Recently we have even had front-page coverage, in Tasmania's poisonous newspaper, of the arguments by animal rights activists against the culling of foxes on the grounds that foxes are cute and furry. I would like to make a stand for all of Australia's native wildlife which is threatened by the buffalos, camels, cane toads, cats, deer, dogs, donkeys, foxes, goats, hares, horses, mynas, pigs, rats, sparrows, starfish, starlings and, in the words of the other Tasmanian Devil, especially rabbits! I know I sound like an ecofascist, some sort of speciesist, but I'd still have them all shot.

Oh, and Good one! to the *Wild* reader who vandalised the 'No Dogs' signs on Mt Wellington to say 'No Stephen Buntons'.

Stephen Buntton
North Hobart, Tas

What a delight to read Cath Phillips' letter (*Wild* no 92) about walking her dogs in a National Park! Shock, Horror! Having walked my pet cane toads in the parks around my home for nearly 20 years, finding someone else who has a similar attitude to roles about pets in National Parks was a real joy.

Reactions from other walkers are almost invariably negative but I've never found a good reason why pet cane toads aren't permitted in Parks. Apparently they are even letting them into Kakadu, which is a World Heritage Area, so it surely must be okay...

I have a range of friends who have ferrets, rabbits, wolves, horses, camels, goldfish and the odd alpaca. I can't see why they should be denied a positive experience in a National Park either. Dear Quentin and Cath, please keep up the good work on our behalf by flagrantly disobeying our laws. Your civil disobedience is most commendable.

Doug Reckord
Kalaru, NSW

What's wrong with taking a dog into the bush (*Wild* no 92)? It's because wildlife are perturbed by the mere presence of a dog, which they sense as a predator, even if it's passive and kept on a leash.

Adrian Cooper
Queens Park, NSW

Deceptions and lies

With the federal election looming, Mark Latham is showing some interest in Tasmanian forestry issues. This means they are getting more of an airing lately. There are, however, a few points that seem to be forgotten...

Much of the reserved land in Tasmania is alpine ecosystems or button grass. In many cases the boundaries of National Parks are at 800 or 900 metres above sea level which is just above the altitude to which tall trees grow. Most of the issue is about logging in old-growth forests. Many wonderful areas, which were selectively logged by axe and bullock team about 100 years ago, would still be logged even if the logging of old growth were halted. Most of us know what we mean by rainforest but wherever eucalypt trees are present the area is defined as a 'mixed forest' and therefore subject to logging.

Both State and Federal Governments seem to believe that everything has been assessed by the Regional Forests Agreement. However, the terms of the RFA were too narrow and didn't properly consider Aboriginal cultural values or geodiversity values.

As the amount of wood-chipping increases the number of jobs is steadily declining. There is [plenty of logging industry] talk about forest types, ecosystems, harvest cycles and regeneration of forests. In reality, however, various practices do not take place on the ground. The industry does not leave any seed



trees to maintain biodiversity because of Occupational Health and Safety issues. Copses of trees are not left because the industry wants to poison with 1080 the browsing mammals for which these would provide shelter. In fact, there is no biodiversity—a result of exclusively using an introduced Victorian eucalypt species.

Even the time-honoured practice of carrying out regeneration burns seems bogus when foresters begin by planting established seedlings! The main reason for regeneration burns is that these dispose of the waste which should otherwise go to the chipper. The problem is that much of it doesn't fit neatly on a log truck and is uneconomical in the time frame required to meet costs.

In the forests debate there is no mention of why Forestry Tasmania is exempt from Freedom of Information legislation and why it is so difficult to get real economic data on this issue. Nor that banks lend a fortune to truck drivers who need to make too many runs to meet repayment schedules—the associated costs to the roads and other costs to the community are also ignored.

Both sides of the debate agree that the real issue is about sustainable forestry practices. For Forestry Tasmania this appears to mean converting as much old-growth forest as possible forever into land available for plantations with a short harvest cycle. This spells the end of minor rainforest species in these areas. Conservationists, on the other hand, want to use the neglected plantations which already exist and encourage production at the high value, low volume end of the market.

Forestry Tasmania's latest policy is a mosaic of 'strip mining'. This is just thinly disguised, patchy clear-felling and in any case, only about five per cent of forests are scheduled

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to be harvested this way. If Mark Latham wins office and has the guts, no old-growth forest will be harvested this way nor, I hope, will any of the other areas in Tasmania. We must keep reminding ourselves and the politicians of the deceptions and lies associated with current forestry practices and continue to push for change.

Stephen Bunton
North Hobart, Tas

Kaboom

I realise that the staff of *Wild* are not responsible for reader contributions, but the publishing of an article in *Wild* 92 borders on negligence. The article described the construction of a windshield for use with canister-type stoves. This is a very dangerous practice. As stated by MSR for all its canister stoves: 'Do not use any windscreen with the stove. Any windscreen, including a standard MSR windscreen, may cause the canister to explode.' The main risk is if you leave the pan on the burner after you have finished cooking; in this situation heat is radiated on to the cylinder, leading to a build-up in pressure. If you really do need to shield the stove, a shield that doesn't cover the cylinder is preferable.

I am not normally the type of person to write in like this, but this alarmed me enough to warrant the time, especially considering the normally excellent quality of your articles.

John Harvey
Brisbane, Qld

On a recent tramping trip in New Zealand I abandoned my faithful liquid fuel stove in favour of a tiny ['brand x'] gas stove. It was a move I did not regret. We encountered wetter than usual conditions which meant that cooking often had to be done in the tent vestibule. Under these conditions the relative safety of using a gas stove was a big advantage. I also particularly appreciated the stove's ease of lighting and precise adjustability for simmering.

There were three of us in the party and we each took a stove and shared the cooking of dinners. I found that one 230 gram cartridge of gas (net) lasted six days, which means that it did two dinners for three and all my own breakfasts and brews (not too many of the latter). I concluded from this that one canister would have lasted me four full days had I been on my own. For comparison, I would normally expect six full days cooking from a 600 millilitre fuel bottle with my liquid fuel stove.

Cost is one disadvantage of gas and another is that the empty canisters are quite heavy. A third factor is that one has to be very careful about using a windshield. I feel that a shield is essential but gas-stove manufacturers warn against them, for good reason. It is on record that someone used an ordinary MSR windshield with a Kovea gas stove and the canister overheated and exploded. My own solution has been to use a folding shield, high enough to protect the burner and billy, but with numerous holes drilled in the lower section to allow air circulation around the canister. MSR has a

more fancy and expensive solution for its gas stove which involves suspending it above ground, together with a special shield.

John L'Ons
Kambah, ACT

A cheesy rendition

Andrew Benson's letter in *Wild* no 92 regarding mobile phone coverage on the Overland Track will not go unchallenged, I suspect. The Managing Editor has already responded by sensibly recommending the use of an EPIRB device in case of emergency...

Installing an apparent safety net of mobile phone coverage somewhat negates the whole activity of getting out in the wilderness. If you want to see nice Tasmanian scenery in safety, there are plenty of nice spots you can drive to and take in the view. Personally, I think it's therapeutic for the soul to be aware that there are still some places close to home where you are actually out of contact with the outside world.

I know the Overland Track is a high-traffic area, but the wilderness that remains there is part of what makes it special. If you are not prepared to take any risks, don't go. Support the wilderness photography industry instead and buy a book of images.

The visual distraction caused by provision of mobile phone coverage is not too important—just paint the towers green and cover them in fake leaves. My gripe is the thought of being woken at an unearthly hour by a cheesy rendition of *Pachelbel's Canon* or the theme from *The Simpsons*. Then people would complain that the 3G video phones don't work and can something please be done about it? Perhaps a satellite public phone with a 'hot-keyed' direct link to the 000 emergency service (that is, a call centre in Mumbai) installed at Windermere or Pelion Hut could be as technological as things can get.

If you're worried, and perhaps even if you're not, carry an EPIRB.

Alex Wegman
St Kilda, Vic

A flea in the ear

Wild is good value, and reading your items in the journal is usually very worth while.

This letter is to express my concern over a piece by Steven Nowakowski which detailed his walk up Thornton Peak (*Wild* no 91). One consequence of Steven's item is that more people may wish to make the same trip, and Thornton Peak will not benefit from any more attention focused on it.

This imposing peak can be seen from points along the roads north from Cairns, from Port Douglas, from the beaches north of Mossman, from the Daintree ferry, and from other roads north of Daintree River. As a consequence the peak is 'self advertising' and needs no further advertisement. Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service receives many enquiries about access to the peak, and the Mossman office of the service provides information when requested by a potential

visitor. The service does not actively promote the walk, and has always discouraged publicity for the site.

From personal knowledge I can tell you of huge graffiti painted on rocks at the peak one time, which took two days and many wire brushes to scrub off. I have brought down machetes, stoves, kero lanterns, tarps, packets of food, Alfoil, discarded plates, mugs and cutlery. Twice I found a fork with sharpened tines bound to a stick, which had been used to spear crayfish. Fires have been lit several times at the tiny camping ground, using wood smashed from the surrounding dwarf trees, despite a small 'no fires' sign being in place. Candles have been burned on logs and rocks leaving the mess of melted wax as a memorial; coffee seeds were once thrown about the camp-site. Bits of string are left tied to trees. Understorey vegetation has been cleared/trampled by people seeking extra tent-sites in an area that can really only support three small tents. Names are carved on trees, and scratched on to boulders.

About 30 years ago I walked up Mt Bartle Frere where, at the top, I came to a tree which was degraded by numerous carvings of names and nailing on of tin plates bearing names. I have always feared the same fate could befall Thornton Peak. The only way that this has not (yet) occurred is because Thornton is a trifle more remote, weather may be worse, the Parks Service has not allowed commercial guided trips, and the Service (which maintains a flagged route to the peak) does some patrolling, requires trips to be booked in advance, allows only one party access at a time, and requires groups to number no more than four persons.

It was most disappointing that Steven Nowakowski, who probably considers himself a friend of wild places, failed to ask the Service about the possible impacts of his pictures and story, because he would very likely have been told that Thornton Peak already receives enough impact from humans, and any item such as his would only increase the impact. It is also unlikely that Steven sought the permission of traditional owners before sending you his article for publication.

I'm sure you have heard the saying: 'the earth needs humans like a dog needs fleas'.

Rupert Russell
Mt Molloy, Qld

Risk taker

At the risk of sounding pompous, allow me to point out what the International Himalayan Club repeatedly spells out. The word Himalaya is plural. One does not speak of 'the sheeps', even in New Zealand, or 'the Englishes' when in England...

Warwick Deacock
Maleny, Qld

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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Ben Derrick in the Swiss Championships.
Finn Marsland

Australian cross-country skiing success

When sports scientists say that cross-country skiing is one of the most demanding sports in the world, they are usually referring to the physiological requirements. For the Australian cross-country ski team the toughest part seems to be getting the funds to go to the Northern hemisphere to compete.

Despite this, the Australian women's team performed particularly well this season. Canberra's KT Calder won a bronze medal at the Swiss Championships, Clare-Louise Brumley from Melbourne took second place in an Austrian Cup and Esther Bottomley from Mt Beauty scored the best ever FIS (International Ski Federation) points for an Australian female. These skiers are on the way up—Calder is 23, Bottomley 21, and it was Brumley's first season in Europe.

The best World Cup result came from Melbourne's Paul Murray who finished 38th in the Stockholm sprint. Murray is based in Sweden for eight months of the year, skiing for a club that pays for him to compete in the Swedish Cup. Ben Derrick, Australia's long-distance specialist, had some sensational races this year on the Worldloppet circuit. He finished second in the 50 kilometre freestyle at the König Ludwig Lauf in Germany and came ninth in the 55 kilometre freestyle at the Dolomitenlauf in Austria. The Worldloppet is a series of international ski marathons that includes the Kangaroo Hoppet at Falls Creek.

Add 18-year-old junior star Ben Sim and Australia has six skiers already qualified for the 2005 World Championships in Oberstdorf, Germany, with others keen to join them. Now the challenge—selling enough lamingtons to get them there.

Finn Marsland

GURKHAS FALL TO GROIN SPRAINS IN TRAILWALKER

In the Melbourne Trailwalker on March 26–28 the unthinkable happened—the legendary Gurkhas were beaten for the first time in Australia. Completing the 100 kilometre course in a minute less than 12 hours were the winning team Groin Sprains Again: Damon Goerke, Peter Mitchell, Mark Phillips, and rogaining and adventure-racing maestro Nigel Aylott. The Queen's Gurkha Signals Regiment finished 95 minutes later. Third place was won by Spur of the Moment, a team of three women and one man, in just over 14 hours.

A record of 337 teams of four started the race at Wheelers Hill, just outside the city. After walking through 100 kilometres of Melbourne's toughest bushland, 333 teams finished at the summit of Mt Donna Buang. Trailwalker Sydney takes place on the weekend of August 28–29.



The Trailbusters finished the Melbourne Trailwalker in 22 hours 22 minutes. Martin Wurt

OAM for Eric Philips

Eric Philips, polar explorer and long-time *Wild* contributor, was awarded the Order of Australia medal (OAM) in January. He is the only person to have skied across the world's four largest ice-caps (see *Wild* no 83 for details). Philips was the Director of Outdoor Education at Geelong Grammar School's Timbertop for five years, and worked as a Field Training Officer for the Australian Antarctic Division. The award recognises his achievements in polar exploration, and services to the community by promoting outdoors activities, particularly to young people.

Eric Philips's frosty look. Eric Philips collection



Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. They can also be seen at www.wild.com.au
Send items for publication to the Managing Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email editorial@wild.com.au

| June | | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----|--|
| 19-20 | 2 x 6 hr Schools, Scouts, Ventures | Vic | http://vrs.rogaine.asn.au |
| 20 | Marathon Race 4 | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 20 | Winter Marathon Race 2 | Qld | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 20 | Wild Water Race 3 | WA | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 20 | Winter Marathon 4 | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 20 | Paddy Pallen 6 hr | NSW | www.nswrogaining.org.au |
| 26 | 8/12 hr | NT | (08) 8941 1059 |

| July | | | |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----|--|
| 3-4 | Australian Rogaining Championships | SA | www.rogaine.asn.au |
| 3-4 | Nav Shield | NSW | www.bwrs.org.au/navshield |
| 4 | Marathon Race 7 | WA | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 10 | High Plains Tour | S | 0417 352 845 |
| 11 | Fitzroy River Marathon | Qld | www.canoeqld.org.au |
| 11 | Marathon Race 5 | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 11 | Northern Marathon Race 3 | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 11 | Wild Water Race 4 | WA | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 18 | Wild Water Race 5 | WA | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 18 | Winter Marathon 5 | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 18 | Calms Eco Adventure Race | Qld | www.ecoadventure.net |
| 24 | Glasshouse Mountains Trail Run | BR | (07) 5495 4334 |
| 25 | Calms 6/12 hr Multisport Race | M | www.adventuresporting.com.au |
| 25-26 | Great Lakes Challenge | NSW | (02) 6554 7194 |
| 29-31 | TORC Outdoor Industry Conference | Tas | www.tasmanianoutdoors.com |
| 31 | 8 hr | Vic | http://vrs.rogaine.asn.au |
| 31 | 8 hr Championships | Qld | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
| 31 | Cabramurra Tour | NSW | (02) 9564 0676 |
| 31 | Mt Hotham-Dinner Plain | S | (03) 9398 0316 |

| August | | | |
|--------|----------------------------|-----|--|
| 1 | Bridge to Brisbane | Qld | www.canoeqld.org.au |
| 1 | Winter Marathon 6 | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 7 | Marathon Race 6 | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 7 | Queensland School Marathon | Qld | www.canoeqld.org.au |
| 7-8 | Avon Descent | WA | www.avondescent.asn.au |
| 8 | Avon Junior Challenge | WA | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 8 | 5 hr Metrogaine | ACT | www.act.rogaine.asn.au |
| 8 | Bullight Charge | S | (03) 5772 2165 |
| 9 | 5 hr Metrogaine | ACT | www.act.rogaine.asn.au |
| 14 | Training Day | Vic | http://vrs.rogaine.asn.au |
| 14 | Razorback Rush | S | (03) 5768 2482 |
| 14 | Snowy Mountains Classic | NSW | (02) 6239 9641 |

| | | | |
|-------|--|-----|--|
| 15 | Winter Marathon 7 | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 15 | 5 hr Metrogaine | ACT | www.act.rogaine.asn.au |
| 15 | Tullaroona/St Philack Cup | S | (03) 5628 1269 |
| 21 | Mt Wilson to 81pm | BR | (02) 4567 1262 |
| 22 | Wild Water Race 6 and State Titles | C | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 22 | Northern Marathon Race 4 | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 22 | Rocky Valley Rush | S | (02) 8024 5896 |
| 27-29 | Sydney Trailwalker | BR | www.caa.org.au/trailwalker/sydney |
| 28 | Lake Macquarie | NSW | www.nswrogaining.org |
| 28 | Queensland Rogaining Championships | Qld | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
| 28 | Kangaroo Hoppet, Australian Birkenbeier, Joey Hoppet | S | (03) 5754 1045 |
| 28-29 | 6/15/24 hr State Championships | R | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
| 28-29 | Spring 24 hr State Championships | R | www.vrs.rogaine.asn.au |
| 29 | Logan Classic | C | www.canoeqld.org.au |
| 29 | Wild Water Race 7 | C | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 29 | Winter Marathon 8 | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 29 | 6 hr Metrogaine | R | http://vrs.rogaine.asn.au |

| September | | | |
|-----------|---|-----|---|
| 4 | Marathon Race 7 | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 4 | Charles Gerrick Memorial | S | (03) 5765 2252 |
| 11 | Glasshouse Mountains Trail Run | BR | (07) 3888 7144 |
| 11-12 | State Marathon Championships | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 11 | Night Navigation Training | R | http://vrs.rogaine.asn.au |
| 12 | Nanga Challenge | C | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 12 | Kosciuszko Tour | S | (02) 6253 9104 |
| 12 | Oronai Valley Classic | BR | (02) 6248 6905 |
| 12 | JP Myall Lakes Classic | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 18 | 6/12 hr | R | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
| 18-19 | Coochie Muddo Paddling | C | www.canoeqld.org.au |
| 19 | Wild Water Race 8 | C | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 25 | Marathon Race 8 | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 25 | 12 hr Veterans Challenge | R | (03) 9438 6626 |
| 25-26 | GLCC State White Water Championships and Barrington Downriver | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 26 | Ted Pace Memorial Marathon | C | www.canoevic.org.au |

| October | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|-----|--|
| 2 | Bendigo Cup | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 2 | Upper Murray Challenge | M | www.uppermurraychallenge.dragnet.com.au |
| 2-3 | Brisbane Valley 100 | Qld | www.canoeqld.org.au |
| 9 | Echuca Mini Marathon | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 9 | PVC John Maclean Challenge | NSW | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 10 | 5/10 km State Championships | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 10 | Marathon Race 1 | C | canoe@canoe.asn.au |
| 16 | Fitzroy Falls Fire Trail Marathon | BR | 0419 515 555 |
| 16-17 | State Marathon Championships | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 17 | 3/6 hr Metrogaine | R | (07) 3369 1641 |
| 20-21 | Gippsland Twin Rivers | Vic | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 23 | Barwon Mini Marathon | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 23 | 6/12 hr | R | (03) 9438 6626 |
| 23 | Spring 12 hr | R | SA (08) 8271 2712 |
| 23 | Spring 12 hr | R | WA (08) 9342 9213 |
| 23-24 | 24 hr NSW Championships | R | (02) 9990 3480 |
| 24 | Brindabella Classic | BR | www.coolrunning.com.au |
| 30-31 | Hawkesbury Canoe Classic | C | www.canoeqld.asn.au |
| 30-31 | 24 hr Race | M | www.adventureracing.com.au |
| 30-31 | 24 hr Tas Championships | R | (03) 6223 4405 |
| 31 | Black Hill Challenge | BR | SA (08) 8338 7223 |
| 30-2 Nov | Bright Four Peaks | BR | Vic (03) 5755 1507 |

| November | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|----|--|
| 6 | Northern Marathon Race 6 | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 7 | Northern Canberra Two Peaks Classic | BR | (02) 8248 6905 |
| 7 | Bridge to Bridge | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 13 | Goulburn River Race | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 13 | 3 hr Mini-gaine and Barbecue | SA | (08) 8271 2712 |
| 13-14 | Adventure Navigation Weekend | R | www.qldrogaine.asn.au |
| 14 | W8CC Wagga Marathon | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 21 | Socialgaine 6 hr | R | www.nswrogaining.org |
| 27 | 24 hr Vic Championships | R | (03) 9438 6626 |
| 28 | Socialgaine | R | (02) 9990 3480 |
| 28 | Spring 6/12 hr | R | www.act.rogaine.asn.au |

| December | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|----|--|
| 4 | Ben Ward Memorial Race | C | www.canoevic.org.au |
| 5 | MWCC 20 Beaches Ocean Classic | C | www.nswcanoe.org |
| 19 | Tour de Mountain | BR | ACT (02) 6296 3969 |
| 27-31 | Murray Marathon | C | Vic (03) 8327 7706 |

Activities: B bushwalking, BR bush running, C canoeing, M multisports, R rogaining, S skiing Organisations: AKC Asot Kayak Club, GLCC Great Lakes Canoe Club, JP Just Paddlers, MWCC Manly Warringah Kayaking Club, PVC Pennith Valley Canoeing, TORC Tasmanian Outdoor Recreation Council, WBCC Wagga Bidgee Canoe Club Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations Canoeing events are organised by the State canoeing associations unless otherwise stated

SCROGGIN

✦ The New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Kosciuszko Huts Association are conducting a study of the **historical huts of Kosciuszko National Park** to help to provide a strategy for their future management. The process may lead to the rebuilding of some huts destroyed in the bushfires of 2003 and will be a factor in determining how future funds are distributed. The NPWS and KHA have repaired Doctors Hut on the Swampy Plains River and are working on Geehi and Old Geehi Huts.

✦ The Victorian cross-country resort of **Lake Mountain** is 'undergoing the most significant facelift ever' according to its Web site. A new, three-level visitor centre under construction—due for completion by May—will have barbecues, ski hire, ski school operations, café and restaurant services and an administrative centre. The infrastructure upgrade includes a new power supply plant, increased water supply storage, an upgrade

of the sewerage treatment plant and an enhanced toboggan run.

✦ Intrepid adventurer **Ben Kozel**, whose article appears in this issue, ran into trouble on **Lake Eyre** recently and was picked up by a helicopter. His paddling trip with a friend stirred up trouble in South Australia's far north, with plenty of people jumping aboard to say 'I told you so'.

✦ Cave mania! The **25th Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation** takes place at Far South Wilderness, Narrows Road, Dover, from 2–9 January 2005, with field trips from 10–23 January. Contact the convener, Stephen Bunton at PO Box 198, North Hobart, Tasmania 7002.

✦ Cover Boy (CB) **Pete Wallis** tells us that the photo in question was taken in summer 1999–2000 during six memorable weeks in **South-west Tasmania** that took in the South Coast and Port Davey Tracks, the Western and Eastern

Arthurs, Vanishing Falls and the Southern Ranges, with resupplies at Scotts Peak Dam and Farmhouse Creek. 'We experienced extremes of weather and some reasonably tough conditions, but never did I wish I was anywhere else', reflected CB.

✦ A new voluntary group has been formed to support the management of walking tracks in Victoria's Grampians 'to achieve the potential that these mountains undoubtedly have to be a world-class walking venue'. If the **Grampians Walking Tracks Support Group** is serious it will no doubt be working towards the one track that would truly justify this tag: along the spectacular but notoriously scrubby crest of the entire Serra Range from Mt Sturgeon to Mt Rosea, which would have the potential to be something like 'the Western Arthurs without lakes'.

✦ The **Australian Koala Foundation** offers **research and restoration tours** to many different areas in Australia. The trips entail working in the bush with experienced AKF staff including scientists, koala experts and habitat restoration enthusiasts. For further information, visit www.savethekoala.com

✦ An **anthology of outdoors women's stories** about 'women, adventure and the wild places on our earth' is being produced. If you are interested in submitting an idea or a story, contact Linda at bellharz@iinet.net.au

JEFF BUTT

Jeff Butt, one of Australia's most accomplished and enthusiastic cave explorers, has died at the age of 44 from the aggressive recurrence of a cancer which had required major surgery two years previously. He had fought his way back to health in the interim to complete many of his current projects.

He was the backbone of the Southern Tasmanian Cavekeepers, meticulously undertaking all the tedious tasks of gear maintenance, rope testing and logging rope usage. He organised SRT training sessions, beginners' trips and search and rescue exercises with the police. His last project was the systematic replacement of the now dodgy bolts installed during the 1980s with stainless steel p-hangers which last for 50–100 years—a project interpreted as 'duckboarding for caves'.

Butt was noted for his exploration and accurate resurveying of many caves including Newdegate (Hastings Tourist) Cave, Mystery Creek Cave, Threefortyone—where he found the connection through to Rift Cave which made the system over seven kilometres long—and Splash Pot which he pushed to Australia's fourth-deepest cave at -306 metres. He had caved extensively in Europe and North Am-

erica and was well regarded in Australian and overseas caving circles. When visitors came to sample Tasmania's wild and sporting caves he was always willing to reciprocate the hospitality shown to him. Butt was also active in regaining and cycling events, both as participant and organiser.


Jeff Butt died exactly one month after marrying Sarah Boyle, his loving partner of ten years, in a moving ceremony at the Springs on Mt Wellington. More than 150 people from Hobart's outdoors community attended, and as a tribute the bride and groom arrived in the police search and rescue helicopter. Butt was a true gentleman. He was a safe and caring caver who looked out for the rest of the party and the well-being of the cave. He will be sorely missed.

Stephen Bunton

Jeff Butt and Sarah Boyle at their wedding on 12 March.
Stephen Bunton



Hero of the outback?

If you love adventure, extreme sports, candlelit dinners and can handle guiding gorgeous American women in the bush, you might be our man! McGregor Casting thought that a 'modern day Indiana Jones' who could 'leap from a plane and waltz whilst quoting Shakespeare' might be hidden among the 'rough gems' of the *Wild* readership and asked for our help to find him. Unfortunately, we missed the application cut-off date for joining the reality show 'that combines the search for love with fantastic adventures'. You'll just have to watch it instead... 

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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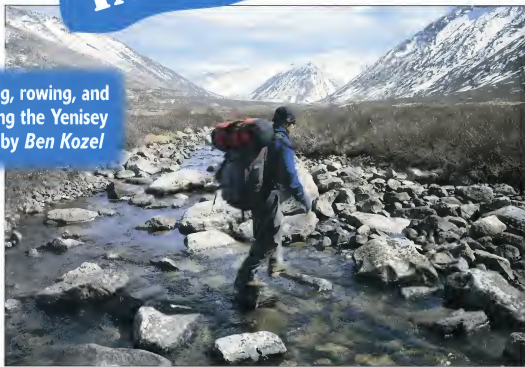
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MISSING IN MONGOLIA

Paddling, rowing, and wrestling the Yenisey River, by Ben Kozel



Remy Quinter at about 2500 metres, deep in the Hangayn Mountains, en route to the source of the Yenisey River. All photos Ben Kozel

'I WILL NOT FAIL.'

As these words were spoken the hair on the back of my neck prickled. And in the eyes of the speaker, Colin Angus—my friend and expedition colleague—I saw a determination that bordered on manic fixation. Colin wriggled the belly of his kayak clear of the muddy river bank and took several paddle strokes. Then the powerful current took over, carrying the little boat and its occupant beyond view within seconds. I turned to face Remy Quinter, the second of my two Canadian companions, with a wry smile.

In the space of half an hour, the flooded Selenga had washed away the illusion that we were masters of our own destiny. With water inundating a broad flood plain, it had been only a matter of time before we lost the original river channel. Dense vegetation had closed in on both sides and we were eventually funnelled down a conduit barely twice the width of our inflatable raft. In such close confines the oars were virtually useless. Overhanging vegetation scraped against rubber and skin, grabbing at the two kayaks strapped to the raft's stern.

Then the inevitable happened, again. The raft lodged sideways against a low-hanging bough. As the port pontoon pressed up against this, the water slamming against the starboard pontoon was able to exert an irresistible downward push. In agonisingly slow motion, the raft went upside down and slid beneath the bough. All we could do was leap on to the offending tree and, from there, praise luck that a cam strap hooked on a branch stub, preventing the raft from being swept down river.

But our relief was short-lived. The four big 115 litre dry bags, which contained the bulk of our equipment, had surfaced ahead of the raft one by one and begun charging downstream. Remy dived in after them, bravely exposing himself to the threat of deadly snags. He'd caught three bags, yet not even his impressive swimming ability had been enough to overtake the fourth—the green dry bag. Realisation dawned quickly. As well as spare parts and repair kits, the green bag contained all the video footage we'd shot. From a documentary-maker's perspective, its loss was a catastrophe. As soon as the first kayak was salvaged, Colin had given chase.

Not until Remy and I righted the raft could the full extent of our losses be assessed. Two camera tripods and half of our provisions had sunk, along with the spare oar. The latter wouldn't have been so sorely missed except for the fact that the left oar had been wrenched from its mounting and was lying somewhere on the bottom of the river.

We were in the Mongolian *aimag* (province) of Hövsgöl, about 700 kilometres north-west of the capital Ulaanbaatar. The nearest settlement, a tiny hamlet named Dzürh, lay 80 kilometres back up river. One hundred kilometres would get us to the next hamlet downstream. What had brought us to such a remote region? And how had we come to be tackling a river that was in major flood?

Well, as improbable as it seemed, all this was part of a mission to travel the full length of the world's fifth-longest river—the Yenisey—and to do so completely under our own power. That is, without the use of motors or even sails. No one had ever done it before. And,

based on recent events, I didn't fancy the odds of us changing that.

Two weeks earlier we had launched our raft and kayaks on the Yenisey's uppermost tributary, the Ider River, some 50 kilometres downstream from a rounded and altogether unremarkable 3000 metre summit in the Hangayn Mountains. Three days before that we had climbed Otgon Tenger, Mongolia's second-highest peak (3915 metres), after mistakenly believing that this holy Buddhist mountain represented the ultimate source of the Yenisey. However, a detailed re-examination of our maps showed that the snow melt from the slopes of Otgon Tenger actually drains into a series of large salt lakes nearby. In contrast, by the time they finally spill into the Arctic Ocean, water molecules from the true source of the Yenisey have spanned one-third of Mongolia and traversed Siberia from south to north, clocking up a total of 5540 kilometres in the process.

Geographically speaking, any river exists as a network of waterways. The water flowing at a point furthest from the mouth is the uppermost tributary. And it follows that the source of this tributary is also the ultimate source of the river. Despite being unbroken between source and sea, the name of the waterway usually changes several times, especially in the case of long rivers. Whenever it intersects with a larger tributary the resultant combined flow either assumes the name of this larger tributary or goes by a different name entirely.

To put this into some sort of perspective, the equivalent of an 'ultimate source' for Australia's Murray River is Carnarvon Gorge in central Queensland. This is the spot within the Murray-Darling catchment basin that is considered to be furthest (in terms of river distance) from the sea.

From its headwaters the Ider had carried us north-east. We descended from high country to the steppe, the rolling grassland that covers much of Mongolia. Despite the imminent summer, temperatures rarely reached double figures. Hard-packed snow still fringed the river in places while the turf carpeting the adjacent flood plain remained a chill-seared fawn. Nevertheless, the landscape was fast rousing from its torpor. Ducks and waders were already abundant, highlighting Mongolia's status as a key breeding ground for wetland bird species. Some, like the Pacific golden plover, migrate from southern Australia each year.

As we were some of the first Westerners ever to see the Ider, we knew very little about its nature before our arrival. We had prudently brought boats that were capable of handling sizeable rapids. The high-volume Riot kayaks provided an optimum blend of white-water stability and hydrodynamic efficiency for long-distance paddling. Thanks to a rowing frame, the three metre Aire raft could be swiftly manoeuvred even fully laden with 200 kilograms of food and equipment. We had nicknamed her 'the Mother Ship'.

Yet the big white water never materialised. There was a much greater threat of being impaled on low, rickety, wooden bridges or decapitated by the cables strung across the river surface for ferrying. We negotiated a succession of grade-four rapids where the Ider was funnelled between jagged uplands of volcanic origin. We'd named this spectacular gorge 'Carcass Canyon' in honour of the foul-smelling yak remains that festered not far from where we had stopped to scout.

Four hundred kilometres downstream from the source, at the confluence of the Ider and the Möron River, the waterway becomes known as the Selenga. But the river changed in much more than its name. The meekness of the Ider was gone. The worst winter in 100 years had left above average deposits of snow in the Altai Mountains of northern Mongolia, which were melting faster than normally due to a warmer than usual spring. The result was a raging Möron River. And upon receipt of her inheritance, the

Selenga had become an angry, heaving brute, flowing three times faster than the Ider. The Möron bequeathed not only muddy water but the legion of trees it had toppled while picking up all that mud. They surged past as the raft bucked off standing waves and got jerked around in patches of violent turbulence.

Despite the ominous conditions we quickly settled into this new river rhythm, even cheering the fact that it would save us valuable time in the long run. What brought us undone, apart from complacency, was the haphazard way in which the water moved over the flood plain. With flows of water diverging and converging, gushing through stands of trees and thicket, it proved all but impossible to keep to the perennial river channel.

For two days Remy and I waited at the site of the flip. Colin did not return. This in itself was no great cause for worry as we had rivalled our original mistake of taking on a swollen river by making



“ WE HAD RIVALLED OUR ORIGINAL MISTAKE OF TAKING ON A SWOLLEN RIVER BY MAKING ANOTHER CLANGER—WE HAD FAILED TO DISCUSS A RENDEZVOUS PLAN. ”

Quinter not far from the source of the Yenisey.

another clanger—before separating we had failed to discuss a rendezvous plan. It was an oversight that could, in fairness, be blamed on the desperation of the moment. But that wasn't all. Only after his departure had it registered with us that Colin was wearing nothing but a

pair of cotton trousers.

As we needed to feel at least marginally in control, we threw ourselves at the task of regaining a means of propulsion. But with only one oar and one kayaking paddle remaining, options were limited. After some deliberation, we disassembled the rowing frame and then, Lego style, put it back together so that the lone oar perched above the stern as a scull. When swung from side to side, the scull could exert thrust in similar fashion to a fish's tail. Or else it could act as a rudder, steering the raft while the other man paddled from the bow.

In the first 24 hours post flip, the water level kept rising, and we feared that our dry haven would also become completely submerged. Then the water began to recede, dropping enough to diminish greatly the chances of another flip by the time we resumed heading downstream.

As we began the search for Colin, I struggled to shake the notion that our comrade had already met a watery end. Knowing that his doggedness had a habit of lapsing into a 'devil may care' attitude, it was easy to envisage him pushing his physical boundaries too far.

Therefore, you can imagine my relief when, shortly after setting out, an old Mongolian woman emerged from a riverside *ger*, pointed at the river and proceeded to mime a kayaker's stroke.

Further on we met people who knew our names. They showed us drawings, made by Colin, which told the story of our journey so far, culminating with the flip. It seemed that after spending the night with them and gorging himself on their food, our chum had continued in pursuit of the green bag. Even had he abandoned the search by this stage, the braiding nature of the river meant that stopping to wait for Remy and me wasn't feasible. Regardless of where he chose to wait, he would not have a view of every channel. We could not expect to be reunited until all the channels converged.

Eventually, after a day and a half of travel, the flood plain constricted to a point where the whole river was squeezed between two steeply sloped hills. But still no Colin! The days were hot, the sun no doubt fierce on the skin of a man without T-shirt, hat or sunscreen. Mosquitoes infested the river-bank thicket in the evening. More than once I pondered what impact all this would have on Colin's mental health.

We felt sure that we'd find him in Hutag, a town of respectable size 150 kilometres downstream from the flip site. Again, we were disappointed. Locals here had also seen Colin simply passing through. 'Maybe he's on his way to the Arctic Ocean solo?' I said to Remy, my tone not entirely sarcastic.

Hutag supplied an opportunity for Remy and me to restore the raft's rowing set-up. We met a

group of Christian missionaries from the USA, engaging in their religious agenda under the pretence of teaching agricultural techniques. As well as feeding us ham-and-pineapple pizza, they donated a well-stocked carpentry workshop to the oar-making cause.

Beyond Hutag, there seemed to be fewer people spread even farther apart—no mean feat in a country with the world's lowest population density. Of course, this may also have something to do with the fact that Mongolians limit their contact with rivers. They



Dwarfed by the crumbling walls of Carcass Canyon.



don't eat fish and do not travel by boat. Rivers are considered the realm of monsters and demons, as are forests and mountains. Few of the folk living in this region had been in contact with foreigners before. It's fair to say that Remy and I probably wouldn't have been regarded with any less wonder had we landed in a spaceship. Not much has changed in rural Mongolia over the past millennium. As in the days when Genghis Khan ruled the largest empire the world has ever seen, nomads herd sheep, goats, yaks, horses and camels over the steppe, subsisting on their meat and milk products. These animals have roamed the landscape for so long that it is difficult to tell what is wild and what is not. The country is effectively an enormous, unfenced paddock. Fields of cereal crops or vegetables are rare—Mongolians insist that the noblest existence is on the back of a horse.

We entered a transitional landscape between the steppe and taiga, being the vast boreal forests that stretch across much of Siberia. The Selenga, now over 100 metres wide, slid between hills encrusted with fir and larch. Two days past Hutag, we watched a

pair of western roe deer swim across the river. The next day, I saw a grey wolf patrolling the edge of our camp.

But it was sad that there were no sightings of a sunburnt, half-starved kayaker. The breakthrough finally came when I called home on the satellite telephone. My mum relayed a message from Colin's mum that he'd been detained by the Mongolian military at the border outpost of Sukbaatar. She also solved the mystery of why Colin hadn't waited for us. It seemed that a couple of days into the separation he'd got it in his head that Remy and I had gone past while he slept, and that he was the one playing catch up.

On the 12th day after the flip, Remy and I rowed into Sukbaatar expecting to find our companion imprisoned. Yet the truth was quite different. Colin had been put up in a hotel and was allowed to come and go as he pleased. Army food was a welcome change from wild rhubarb and raw birds' eggs.



Above, communication with the local Mongolians often amounted to an exchange of grins and stares. Right, the mother of all mothers; a Nenets babushka, resplendent in traditional felt robe, reindeer skin boots and hood lined with Arctic fox fur.

'Looks like you've put on weight', Remy teased.

The army had also given him a pair of boots, a shirt, and even some pocket money. More amazing still, he had the green dry bag! Three days into his ordeal a pair of horsemen had beckoned him to shore and casually asked whether the bag they'd discovered was his.

Astonishingly, our passage into Siberia proved to be a relatively hassle-free exercise. Rather than wariness, the Russian border officials demonstrated an appreciation for what we were doing and an understanding of the curiosity that motivated us. It would be the same with almost every Russian we met from then on.

The landscape changed when we crossed the border, in that the presence and impact of humans became more noticeable. From the smoke curling out of distant, industrial chimneys to the ruins of a baroque-period monastery in a riverside wheat field, the Siberian length of the Selenga valley did not feel wild.

During those first days in Siberia it was the prospect of Lake Baikal that commanded my attention. As one Russian put it, 'You must have vodka for when you reach Lake Baikal.'

'For celebrating?' I responded, envisioning how grand the sight of the lake must be.

'No', he retorted, eyebrows knitting together in concern. 'For warmth.' He paused a moment before adding, 'And for courage.'

The Selenga empties into Lake Baikal by a classic, fan-shaped delta. At its mouth we exchanged the silty, brown flow we'd

known for six weeks for the clear, still water of the world's second-largest lake. Shaped like a banana, Baikal is roughly 700 kilometres long and an average of 50 kilometres wide. Rugged mountains fringe much of the shore line.

It is the deepest lake in the world, plunging to 1600 metres, with an average depth of almost one kilometre. So immense is Baikal that it creates its own weather systems. Waves up to three metres high can be generated on this lake, which many local Russians prefer to call a sea. One particularly disturbing account we heard described how a ship had sunk during a freak storm because it filled up with hailstones.

Lake Baikal is cold. Even in the middle of summer the water temperature climbs to only a few degrees above zero. If the raft had been flipped by three metre waves in the middle of the lake it would undoubtedly have been lethal. The surrounding air was chilly

enough. Before long we swapped shorts and T-shirts for thermals and fleeces. Overall, it's fair to say that fascination and a sense of enchantment suppressed a good portion of the anxiety I felt over rowing across such an ill-tempered lake.

In the early evening, lightning flashed in the west and I shivered at the possible implications. We weren't entirely alone—as I rowed a type of



seal endemic to the lake surfaced just behind the raft and regarded me through large, glossy, black eyes. Later, a north-westerly scurried over the mountains on the north shore and directly opposed us for much of the night. Although it spawned waves that made rowing difficult, none of us complained too much. The waves were less than a metre in height—babies compared with what a wind from the south-west could potentially whip up over more than 200 kilometres of open water.

The crossing lasted for 20 hours. We then continued west along the northern shore, hugging the base of the Primorskiy Range as it dipped splendidly into the sapphire water.

The Angara River flows out of Baikal less than 100 kilometres from the lake's eastern end. It represents the next incarnation of the Yenisey. For us, the Angara signalled the end of the first leg of our odyssey. Having travelled nearly 1500 kilometres by kayak and raft, it was time to 'upgrade' to a wooden boat.

The boat we selected for the job of carrying us to the Arctic, a five metre, clinker-built dory, had seen better days. Locals in the dacha village where we found it claimed that the owner had been

bumped off by the Mafia. After transporting the dory to the old Cossack-founded city of Irkutsk, we spent the best part of two weeks making the hull seaworthy. The subsequent construction of a V-berth, galley and a cabin that could be enclosed set us up for a 24-hour rowing regime.

Meanwhile, there were additions to team personnel. Tim Cope, fresh from riding a recumbent bicycle across the breadth of the Asian continent, had joined us for the remainder of the journey to the Arctic. And one of the locals who'd helped out during the dory refit accepted our invitation to come aboard as a passenger for the row to Bratsk. Twenty-two-year-old Olya Artemyeva, a psychology student, had been intrigued by 'rougher' modes of travel ever since the staging of the Camel Trophy off-road race in Irkutsk.

Siberia is a region of both epic and dramatic proportions. It is twice the size of Australia and takes up one-tenth of the world's land surface. In the south, pristine wilderness merges with some of the most grand-scale and daring examples of human engineering. A whopping 800 kilometres of the Angara exists as two enormous reservoirs. We rowed over the top of centuries-old villages drowned behind a hydroelectric dam 100 metres high and 500 metres long. In all, eight days of rowing were needed for the length of the first reservoir to reach Bratsk.

Five people crammed on to a five metre long boat around the clock certainly generated a degree of tension, as you may have already suspected. Privacy was non-existent and sleep got interrupted by a midnight, 2, or 4 am rowing shift. Other than that, the days passed as a blissful mix of banter, reflection, and physical engagement with the landscape. Colin wasn't too far off the mark when he noted, 'It feels like we've got our own perfect little commune happening here in the middle of a big collapsed commune'. Fishermen occasionally stopped by in their tinies, feeding us berries and raw fish. Other locals waved us to shore for a barbecue and complementary vodka-swilling session.

Beyond the smaller dam at Ust-Ilimsk the Angara is allowed to behave as a true river. But here were rapids, an unexpected danger given the maturity of the river. At times standing waves spanned the entire half kilometre width of the river, filling the air with never-ending thunder. Collision with a submerged rock could have simultaneously sunk the dory and our hopes of reaching the river mouth, that year at least. Freeze-over meant our window of opportunity would probably be closed by the end of September unless we put our ice-skates on.

At 58 degrees latitude, the Angara meets the Yenisey proper. The river's namesake tributary rises in the autonomous Tuva Republic, home of the world-famous Tuvan throat singers. By the time it intersects with the Angara it is flowing at a rather speedy 17 kilometres an hour—not bad for a river that is almost a kilometre in width.

The increase in water velocity assuaged fears that we might run out of time. But in keeping with the tone of the journey, a new disquiet arived to take over. Two hundred kilometres back up the Yenisey proper, there is a facility that once produced all the Soviet Union's weapons-grade plutonium. The ominously named Krasnoyarsk-26 now churns out Samsung TVs; however, the by-products from its former charter linger on. Hundreds of kilometres

downstream, radionuclide levels in the soil and water remain alarmingly high, as does the incidence of cancer and birth defects.

As I peered at the densely forested shore, nothing looked amiss, which was perhaps the most sinister aspect of all. Not fooled, we filtered our water stocks from small creeks flowing into the Yenisey.

The only thing glowing green was the meteor that fell across the twilight sky as we skirted the Tunguska region. It burnt bright for ten seconds before disintegrating. My eyes shone for hours afterwards. Childhood memories of old footage depicting the search for the site of a 1908 meteor explosion in the same area were what had first fuelled a desire to travel to Siberia.

The surprisingly warm Siberian summer accelerated to a close as

we pushed north towards the Arctic Circle. Trees grew paler and ever more stunted until finally giving way to the red and orange hues of tundra heath. Head winds strengthened and became increasingly bitter. The basic act of rowing kept degenerating into an ordeal. 'It's like trying to lever concrete oars through honey', Tim grunted one day through clenched teeth. The non-rowers invariably huddled inside the cabin, dreading the moment when they'd get their next call-up. Night shifts were the worst, as you swapped warmth



The refitted dory in full flight. Tim Cope, standing, tries his luck with the fishing rod while Quinter heaves on the home-made larch oars.

Ben Kozel


has a fascination with water, the result of growing up in South Australia—a State where the stuff is traditionally scarce. His book about the trip, *Five Months in a Leaky Boat*, has just been published. He has worked in conservation but is now merging an affinity for wilderness travel with aspirations to teach geography. For more information on Ben's journeys go to www.benkoz.com



and an exhausted slumber for a numb face and the pain of greasing stiff, sore joints.

The one thing that did not cool off was the reception we got from Siberian folk. Right to the end they lavished hospitality on us. Twenty kilometres from the mouth, gale-driven swells forced us into a narrow, deltaic channel. And here we were given refuge by a family of Nenets reindeer herders. Ancestors of the North American indigenous tribes, this family, like many other Nenets, still lived in tepee-shaped *chums* and followed the migrating herds of reindeer across the tundra.

Early the next day we made a dash on the ebbing tide, savouring an unusually long interlude of calm between storms. At midday on 23 September, four-and-a-half months after the first paddle stroke, the Yenisey disgorged us into the sea. This was the first glimpse of the Arctic Ocean for each man on board the dory. To celebrate, we did what every other explorer has done since time immemorial I'm sure—we stripped bare and dived in. ☺



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Storming the Castle

Andrew Bain penetrates the defences of the Budawangs,
southern New South Wales




IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYWHERE IN THE Australian bush. The earth was dry and recently burnt, the air thick with heat and flies. Only prior knowledge suggested that I was just a few hours' walk from the distinctive peaks of the northern Budawang Ranges, their perfect plateaux balanced on confidence-punishing escarpments like islands in the sky. It was this prospect—the imbalance between here and there—that quickened my step as I set out through the bush uniformity from Morton National Park's Wog Wog entrance, dipping to cross the fast-flowing Wog Wog Creek.

Scraping through thick scrub, I ascended again to a gentle spur, the bush ringing with the sound of cicadas and the track's edges peppered with the last wild flowers of the season. The spur wound east, gently higher, delivering me to the edge of the Corang Plateau where two conglomerate rock outcrops heralded my arrival into escarpment country. And such escarpments...ahead, like ribbons of rock, walls tall and sheer undercut the mountains I'd come to claim.

Before this, and of different character, rose my first destination, Corang Peak, standing resolute against the weathering that had

flattened its time-worn neighbours. Funnel-like in shape, it bore some resemblance to the nearby—and infinitely more famous—Pigeon House.

Atop the plateau, the bush closed over again, grating my legs like cheese, before mercifully (but fleetingly) breaking open. Suddenly the plateau was covered in heath, almost littoral but for the fact that I was 700 metres above sea level. Following the bare line of track through the moss that coated the surface rock, I skirted the small hump of Korra Hill, rising to my first view with real depth.



Viewed from Mt Owen, the Castle is a daunting prospect. Pigeon House lurks in the background on the right.
All photos Andrew Bain

Central to the scene was the thinning point of Pigeon House, so like a Glasshouse Mountain, with the Pacific Ocean beyond. To the side was Mt Owen and behind it, shadow-like, the Castle; two peaks with the towering escarpments and paving-flat summits so characteristic of the Budawangs.

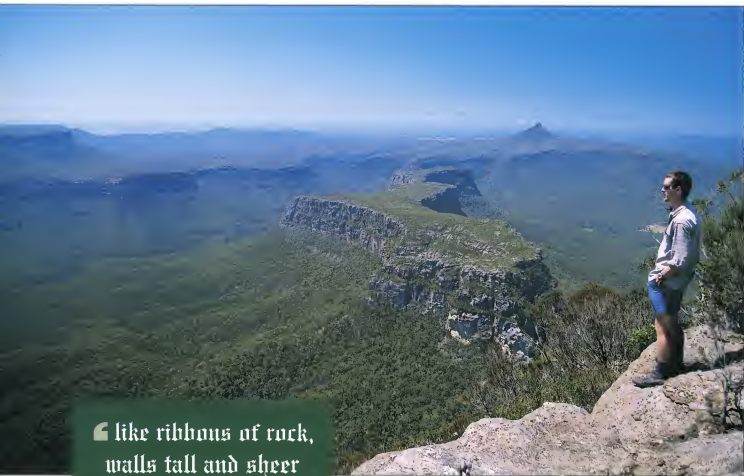
Climbs to Mt Owen and, ultimately, the Castle would be the culmination of my walk

quiet but rain still mired its swampy banks, submerging the track so that I was forced to watch each step to avoid the frogs that swam in its flow. (I'd see more frogs and tadpoles than any other wildlife over the duration of the walk.) This in an area renowned for its summer aridity.

A short distance along the brook I turned into its southern cliffs where an overhang

the Castle from sight and as I pushed on, swinging towards Bibbenluke Mountain, Pigeon House too fell beneath their shadowed lines. I was left with a view of receding blue silhouettes, the last of which was the Pacific Ocean.

The track wound behind Bibbenluke Mountain, dropping to the headwaters of the Corang River and an open, riverside camp-



like ribbons of rock,
walls tall and sheer
undercut the mountains
I'd come to claim.

Above, the author contemplates Byangee Walls and Pigeon House from the Castle. **Right**, this time the author admires Corang Arch, on the edge of the Corang Plateau.

and as I looked at them now I was already contemplating their weaknesses. Were there walkers' lines through these ramparts, so abrupt and seemingly impenetrable? For now I didn't see them, only walls of the sort for which I normally need ladders.

Corang Peak passed like a speed hump; then began my descent off the plateau, forking right to its north-eastern edge. I passed Corang Arch, a Lifesaver of rock balanced on the plateau's fringe, before the plateau ended in a wave-like formation of rock that threatened to break over the valley below.

A quick descent delivered me into the valley and a crossroad of waterways, with creeks entering, and leaving from all directions. My bearing was east, into Burrumbeet Brook.

The name 'brook' suggests placidity but the cliffs that fringed it implied it hadn't always been so. Burrumbeet Brook ran

tucked behind a dribbling waterfall served as a camping cave. I laid out my sleeping-mat on the cave's earth floor, from where I could stare across the valley at cliffs pitted by the scars of age—I'd found a room with a view and running water.

The next day I planned a short pack-hauling day—only a few kilometres into the cliffs of Mt Cole—but one with plenty of side exploration. Without my pack, I'd also make climbs to Mt Tarn and Mt Owen.

At dawn, mist followed a line along Burrumbeet Brook, as true to the creek's watery thread as a contour. I set out through this cool haze, walking upstream to the faint turning to Yurga Lookout. Head down, I burrowed through the bush to the small outcrop of rock.

Ahead, Mts Owen and Cole seemed to merge as one, the narrow chasm that separated them all but invisible. They blocked

site. Here, I dumped my pack, crossed the river and set off up the lower slopes of Mt Tarn.

At 887 metres Mt Tarn was the highest summit I'd reach during the walk, yet it is one of the least acclaimed of the Budawangs' peaks. Perhaps this is because it also offers the least resistance, the track meandering high on to a simple spur. Behind me, Mt Cole—and, by extension, the almost conjoined Mt Owen—grew ever more daunting, breaking up into the erratic beehive shapes of Donjon Mountain.

At the spur's head the track entered a damp, perpetually shaded hollow beneath sandstone bluffs where a sliver of rainforest adheres perfectly to the shadows. Ferns press against the bluffs for protection.

The track turned, following a sandstone wall coated in lichen the colour of orange rind through a gullied break in the rock and

on to the plateau summit. The name Mt Tam creates an image of a summit sprinkled with picturesque lakes, but in reality it's a highland swamp. Boardwalks bridge the mire, crossing to the peak's northern end, frog song resounding like a pulse as I wandered atop the rock ribs that slice through the summit.

Retracing my steps, I returned to the camp site, gathered my home and began

the final approach to Mt Cole and the rock walls that had been luring me since I left Wog Wog.

The track meanders high, crossing the shoulder of Bibbenluke Mountain—a section of walking notorious for its route-finding difficulties although recent track work seemed to have cleared its course. Even with my eyes constantly drawn higher to

the most prominent of Donjon Mountain's summit bluffs, my feet never strayed from the track.

Through the bush I continued until, suddenly, those cliffs I'd been eyeing so warily were rearing above me like tall buildings. At the climb's end I stepped straight into the dripping cool of a camping cave as though I'd been swallowed by the rock.



I'd reached what was probably the heart of the Budawang. Here rise Mts Cole, Owen, Donjon, Shrouded Gods, Mooryan and Nibelung, effectively one sprawling mountain divided by a road map of narrow chasms.

A short distance on, just beyond Trawalla Falls, I dumped my pack in a more homely camping cave, then set out for Mt Owen. I rounded a cliff bend beyond the cave and entered the claustrophobic ravine dividing Mts Cole and Owen. A junk yard of boulders filled the narrow space, forcing me to scramble high on to Mt Owen's sandstone slab at one point, scampering beyond the impasse like a monkey.

Climbing on through the tapering valley, I rose to meet the cliffs until a gully on my right finally revealed the break in Mt Owen's defensive wall. Quickly, much more easily than I'd imagined, I was through its barricade and on the plateau, following a cairned course across its mottled top to the arrow-tipped southern point of its summit. Three wedge-tailed eagles cruised silently just metres overhead, watching me as I watched them, so near that I could look them in the eye. I was treated to my first unimpeded view of the Castle, the mountain I'd come to see and climb, the peak so named by Captain James Cook because it looked like an impenetrable fortification. Two hundred and thirty years had done nothing to soften its stance.

The Castle is not a mountain that impresses with its height—it rises only 836 metres above sea level. What elevates it above an already-impressive Budawang crowd is its forbidding summit block: a shape that might have been sliced by a pastry cutter; walls that might have been planned by a handyman. Straight as a city building, the escarpment drops hundreds of metres towards the wooded valleys. Beside it, Pigeon House looks no more than the pimple it resembles. It was as daunting and exciting a vision as anything I could remember in the Australian bush. Little wonder that the Castle was apparently not climbed until the 1940s.

At its northern end the Castle crumbles into a broken tail of escarpment. From here, worn tracks drape into the valley as a cathartic reminder that there is indeed a walker's way on to this peak, even though it still looked a pipedream from Mt Owen. I returned to the camping cave, inspired for the new day.

Woken again by the dawn onset of flies and mosquitoes, I left my cave and turned briefly back on my route. My path to the

Castle would now be driven more by topography than maps, twisting and turning through the tiny 'lanes' that separated the huddled mountains. It was a maze of nature's choosing—down one lane; turn into another; hard left; bank right—a dizzying tease before the appearance of the Castle.

I began along the base of Mt Cole's escarpment, following it up to the imperceptible pass that separated Mt Cole from Donjon Mountain. The wide opening into which I first turned closed in until the rainforested gap between the two mountains narrowed almost to nothing. I bridged my way above the running stream and on. The maze walls guided me right, into the notch between Mt Cole and the Seven Gods Pinnacles, this row of rock towers at watch over the ravine like Easter Island's moais. Shrouded Gods Mountain loomed behind, the scenery fitting to the awed nomenclature.

The track crested midway along the valley, then dropped quickly between straight rock walls shaggy with moss. It felt a little as though I was entering a lost city—Angkor Wat in the Australian bush. The 'city' became more cavernous as I descended, the creek running beneath gloomy overhangs, until the walls nar-

rowed so much that they pinned my rucksack between them. I was stuck momentarily, as helplessly as a turtle on its back.

Across bare slabs I headed for the pass, which divides valleys more than mountains. Shallow vistas back to Mt Cole and Shrouded Gods Mountain opened behind me with Mt Nibelung available for closer inspection. Striped, streaked mountain walls—part Blue Mountains, part Grampians—dominated the view in every direction.

From the pass the track slithers down a slippery chute, my passage aided by a fixed chain, and makes a final, bowels-of-the-valley approach towards Castle Saddle. The maze had at last been negotiated, but not before the valley's razor grass shredded the few bits of my legs not already bloodied.

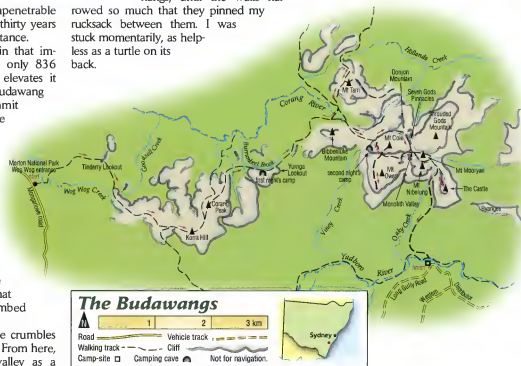
There were signs at the saddle to every where but the Castle, its deliberate omission another reminder that the most problematic section of my walk lay ahead. Ignoring the sign, I took the faint track that leads directly up the ridge, swinging to the back of the escarpment, often in touching distance of its rock. The track comes to an obvious end at a cliff where arrows scratched into the rock point skyward through a broken line in the escarpment.

I scooted up, forking left into a gully, then relentlessly on. Walking was mixed with scrambling and a Spider-man moment on a fixed length of rope. In a short time I was on top of the plateau, heart beating fast but body and pride intact.

At the summit edge I looked across New South Wales. The Byangee Walls zigzagged towards Pigeon House below, and to the right my approach route faded beyond Mt Owen and Corang Peak. Directly beneath

Andrew Bain

is a Melbourne writer who spends too much time wandering when he should be working. He is the author of *Headwinds*, a book about a 20,000 kilometre cycling journey around Australia.



At Monolith Valley, past another weathered arch, all the area's tracks and valleys converge. The track I was to follow to the Castle seemed to turn back on itself, heading in behind the Seven Gods Pinnacles before righting its course and swinging towards Nibelung Pass.

my feet a sweeping spur pointed like a finger to my walk's end, 750 metres below in Long Gully.

I lingered at the plateau edge, savouring my conquest. A marauding army of one, I'd broken through the Castle's defences. Now I just had to get down.



*Up in arms in
defence of his
tropical paradise,
Cocos Islands,
Indian Ocean.*

Alive 'n' kickin'

Eyeball to eyeball with our wonderful wildlife, through the lens of **Alistair McGlashan**



Goanna, Channel Country, New South Wales.



Above, albatross and chick, Midway Atoll.

Below, hermit crab, St Helens, Tasmania.



Alistair McGlashan is an outdoors adventurer who spends about 250 days in the field photographing everything from wildlife to fish. Working as a full-time photojournalist he regularly contributes to dozens of magazines around the world. Through his images Alistair hopes to inspire others to get out there and enjoy the great outdoors.



Bushfire JOURNEY

Trevor Lewis explores Canberra's burnt mountains

THREE DAYS BEFORE THE BIG FIRE-STORM, I pedalled out of town on a pannier-laden mountain bike, intent on spending time in the national capital's backyard back country. I have never owned a car, and one of the joys of living in Canberra is that you can get to good walking country by bicycle. Even so, I might have asked myself the question 'Is this trip really necessary'? Going bush was a

penitential experience in January 2003. Bushfires were burning everywhere and the forecasts held no hope of relief from the hot, dry conditions which had predominated since late spring the year before.

But I've never been a fair-weather-only bushwalker. My love for wild places includes the willingness to experience them in bad times as well as good.

Beyond the final paling fences of suburbia loomed Mt Tennent's abrupt and outcrop-studded slope although a thickening smoke haze obscured much detail. I passed through the village of Tharwa and dropped in at the Namadgi National Park visitors' centre at the mountain's foot and at the northern terminus of the Australian Alps Walking Track. The rangers told me that the southern parts



Mt Gudgenby dawn.
Michael Maconachie

of the park remained open but they didn't want to give me a camping permit. I pressed them and they grudgingly allowed me a night at the Orroral River camping ground.

The last time I'd stayed overnight at Orroral was on the final leg of an extended cycling and walking tour in November 2000. It had rained heavily almost every day and northern New

South Wales had been in the grip of a flood emergency. I brought home strong impressions from that trip. Images of extensive and magnificent alpine-ash forests in the mid-northern Kosciuszko National Park remain vivid. I wonder if any of that alpine ash has survived.

The Orroral River, which had been in foaming spate back then, had shrunk to a string of stagnant puddles and pro-

vided a haven for mosquitoes. In such dry times I hadn't taken the mosquito menace seriously enough. I'd brought my old japara tent which lacks insect screening. It wasn't a restful night.

A weak easterly change brought an almost cool and overcast morning. But with so much smoke around you couldn't tell where cloud ended and haze began. By mid-morning the 'clag' had burned

away and the day was building into a scorcher. I decided to make a base at Jacks Hut, a few kilometres from the Boboyan road head, for walks to Mt Gudgenby and Sentry Box Hill. The hut would make a credible fire refuge; a multitude of kangaroos had grazed the surrounding pasture to stubble. It also had plenty of water in its tank, and with doors and windows open it made as good a place as to escape the sun for an hour or so.

As I gained height the wind shifted, pushing the smoke plume further north and improving local visibility. The 700 metre climb passed through a variety of forest types and mixed easy walking with areas of scrub, the worst of it secondary growth where the 1983 bushfire had burned. A sweep of granite slabs made an impressive prelude to the summit area, where brilliantly green snow grass and *prostanthera* shrubs in flower greeted me. The breeze felt pleas-

dead kangaroo nudged at the edge of my consciousness. During the night it became cool enough to cover myself with my unzipped sleeping-bag, and by dawn it had accumulated a surprising amount of dew.

Drying it would present no problem as it was developing into another very hot day. The dead kangaroo was releasing a stink as I spooned down my muesli. I still hoped to make a day trip to Sentry Box Hill, but would Jacks Hut be bearable when I returned? I



'Before', Tidbinbilla Range from Camel Back. Right, 'after', Yankee Hat, Namadgi National Park, in the grip of the fires. Maconachie

I set up my stove in the fireplace, had a brew, then made another brew to fill my Thermos, put it in my day pack and set out.

Before leaving the hut, I glanced through the window—and then wished I hadn't. A very big dead kangaroo lay just outside. I sniffed; he didn't stink too much, but then again, he looked as though he hadn't been dead all that long. When the rot set in, he'd no doubt render the hut uninhabitable for some time.

Was this trip really necessary? The temperature was soaring and the valley was filling with smoke; it seemed to lie right in the path of the plume. I told myself not to worry; several ranges and valleys separated me from the nearest fire front. I passed the remnants of the Boboyan pine plantation and skirted Bogong Swamp where green-tinged tussocks suggested that some moisture lingered. I crossed and recrossed Bogong Creek, which only just still carried water, and started the climb to Mt Gudgenby's summit

antly cool, and after clambering to the trig point and taking in the limited views I found a deeply shaded overhang among Stonehenge-like rocks. Here I drained my Thermos, munched several oranges, drank plenty of water, and chilled out most pleasantly for an hour or so.

On the descent I followed scrub-free leads through rocky areas and wound up slightly off course as a result. On lower slopes I encountered more dogwood than I would have liked. Upon reaching the valley floor, I tried to dunk myself in Bogong Creek's shallow waters. I emerged slightly cooler but covered in sediment. Back at the hut, that dead kangaroo was definitely beginning to ripen. Despite the desire to catch any cool breeze, I kept the windows closed while preparing an evening meal.

That night I unrolled my sleeping-mat in the great outdoors. No mosquitoes annoyed me, but an almost full moon made it feel like trying to get to sleep in a room with the light on while occasional wafts from the

tuned my pocket radio in search of the forecast and received grim news; the authorities had declared a total fire ban for the next five days and closed all Australian Capital Territory forests to the public. Responsibility dictated that I curtail my plans and make tracks for the city. The rangers would certainly be spitting chips if they were called out for an overdue bushwalker at the same time that they had a fire-fighting campaign on their hands. I loaded up the bike and set out.

It wasn't a pleasant ride, battling heat, smoke and a powerful head wind. A vast number of kangaroo carcasses were littering the countryside, some were road kill but many, like that departed friend at Jacks Hut, seemed to have starved. You could say that the stink of death was in the air.

As I plodded through the suburban outskirts, a huge smoke plume completely covered the Tidbinbilla Range. More and more of the alpine area was burning. Still I hoped that some of the good country would be spared.

A very warm evening drove me out of my flat and down to the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. I went for a swim and then sat mesmerised by the throbbing glow of fires and flare-ups in the western darkness.

The temperature had climbed into the 30s by nine am the next day, the day of the firestorm. It seemed like a good day for the great indoors. With all the windows closed and blinds drawn my flat made a comfortable refuge. I spent the hottest hours writing a long letter to an old friend. 'Today it seems that the whole of the Alps are ablaze', I tapped on to the screen. I could hear and feel the buffeting of a gale while glimpses through the venetian blinds showed a smoke cloud that was building to volcanic proportions.

By mid-afternoon the darkness was like that preceding a huge thunderstorm. It was obvious that vast areas were burning, but it still came as a surprise to receive a phone call from my

mother telling me that fire had invaded suburbia. At first I didn't believe it: the swath of parched grazing land separating the suburbs from the nearest Brindabella bush surely wouldn't carry a fire? But at Mum's prompting I tuned in to the local ABC station and found it running continuous coverage of the emergency.

No one had expected this—huge forces had brought random devastation to the tidy world of the garden city. Yet even as I registered the mind-numbing details of houses lost and infrastructure destroyed, my feelings remained in the beloved High Country, where I knew without needing to hear it on the news that major damage was occurring.

Sometime in the evening a sudden sharp wind signalled that an easterly change had arrived. The temperature dropped and the crisis, as far as Canberra was concerned, began to recede. In the northern suburbs only the heavy

“the spurs and gullies plummeting into the Cotter catchment in a scene that looked more like the aftermath of a nuclear blast than a bushfire.”



haze and a confetti of charred leaves hinted at the catastrophe. But in the Alps the destruction continued, and would do so for days and then weeks to come.

More than a month after the fire-storm, the first drought-relieving rain and cooler weather cleared the last of the smoke, bringing Canberra's wilderness skyline back into view. And at times, particularly in the late afternoon with the sun shafting from behind, you could run your eye along the bumps and protuberances on that familiar horizon—Mt Coree, the Tidbinbilla Range, Mt Gingera, Booroomba Rocks and Mt Tennent—and almost believe that nothing had changed. Most parkland in the ACT remained off limits to the public making it hard to test that impression. But I'd grown up with those places and I had to see what had become of them. I decided to risk redirection and mounted an expedition.

The bicycle helped to make it a low-key affair; it's not hard to conceal. I pedalled out to the Cotter and toiled uphill through the wreckage of the Pierces Creek plantation

forests. I passed Laurel Camp: the corrugated-iron-sheathed longhouse had accommodated forest workers in the 1940s and almost nothing of it remained, just a few scraps of twisted metal and one of the fireplaces.

I left the bike near the northern foot of the Tidbinbilla Range and could look across the headwaters of Oakey Creek to slopes where some green forest canopy survived. By contrast the beginning of the climb to the top of the range led through an area where the blast had destroyed the canopy completely, leaving only skeletons of trees. I was looking for signs of life, signs of hope, and noted that the grass-trees were sprouting strongly and a few epicormic buds were poking from gaunt and blackened trunks.

Where the fire had roasted the canopy but not removed it I found myself in a parody of a European woodland in autumn. The forest was a charcoal- and sepia-tinged replica of what it used to be. New growth became increasingly scarce as I gained height although a rash of brilliantly green bracken in a gully below Camel Back came as a pleas-



Historical ACT-NSW border-marker tree beside the Mt Franklin road. Dianne Thompson



Australian Capital Territory

5 10 km

Road
Approximate area
of fire damage
Not for navigation.



ant surprise. But I passed around the shoulder of Camel Back to see the spurs and gullies plummeting into the Cotter catchment in a scene that looked more like the aftermath of a nuclear blast than a bushfire. Only the blackened, bare bones of the forest clung to slopes where even the soil seemed to have burned, laying bare details of geological structure never before seen. In many places the rock itself had shattered and splintered due to the phenomenal temperatures.

I continued along the ridge to Mt John and Tidbinbilla Peak and put up my tent on a terrace below Tidbinbilla Mountain. I clambered to the summit cairn, surveyed the burnt country and wondered whether I'd ever come to terms with the scale of the

tragedy. In more than 30 years as a bushwalker and ski-tourer I'd built a strong attachment to the special places in the Australian Alps. Now those places no longer existed. Snow gum and alpine ash take decades to regenerate; many historical huts are gone for ever. I felt that a lesson lay in this somewhere but I could only experience it as a terrible loss.

It's usually a pleasure to wake at sunrise in a well-pitched tent in an alpine location. But in this dam-

but for once I hadn't wanted to join the rush and had limited my skiing to a handful of day-trips. Just over a week previously I'd suffered a day of wind and sleety rain on the trails at Pensher. In such miserable conditions the colours and patterns in glistening snow-gum bark are one of those little things that help to take your mind off the discomfort. With only blackened branches and charred trunks in sight, even that small reward was denied to me.

Another outing, in clearer weather (although the westerlies still gave us a pum-

produced some long, phallic flower-heads. Some of the eucalypts in this mixed forest had responded to the fire by shedding all their bark to expose a smooth, gleaming white, and sometimes ochre-tinted, layer of underbark which was in striking contrast to the black that still set the tone among other trees.

Rich fields of bracken and ferns gave me something more to smile about as I sloggled uphill to the crest of the range. I left the fire track below Camel Back's eastern flank and headed cross country to the summit. I had entered the snow-gum zone, which had become 'the place of dead trees'

and will remain so for the rest of my bushwalking life. Yet shoots emerging at the base of some trunks will one day grow into something like the forest that used to exist, the forest that I remember. A fuzz of brilliantly green growth carpeted the ground and a wallaby hopped away as I approached the peak.

The view south over the Western Spurs to Tidbinbilla Mountain remained a shocker, nothing but scorched earth and dead timber. However, I was beginning to sense a way to get back into this country. I resolved to keep in touch



There would have been no complaints about cold food! (Mt Franklin Chalet stove.) Thompson

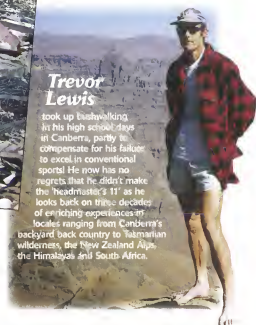
aged place the absence of a morning chorus of birdsong was a prelude to the lifeless scene that greeted me. I had no desire to linger and quickly ate breakfast and packed. I retraced my outward route and completed the ride back to my home in Canberra's leafy inner-northern suburbs by mid-afternoon. The stink of charcoal and burning stayed with me for some time.

Eight months after the fire-storm I returned to the Tidbinbilla Range. The whole of Namadgi National Park and the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve was finally officially open, and I celebrated the occasion with a day walk to Camel Back. I locked the bike to a tree and set out on a perfect outdoors day, cool but bright and clear in the wake of a front that had dropped snow on the high peaks of the Brindabella Range.

Indeed, a series of late-season falls had provided a bonanza for cross-country skiers,

melling) had taken two of us into the Snowy River valley upstream from Guthega and on to the slopes of Mt Twynam. This area had largely escaped the holocaust but squinting into the wind from the top of the Main Range allowed glimpses of the Western Spurs, the Geelhi valley and the Grey Mare Range, all of which had been utterly trashed. Looking into the naked warps and folds of the vast and rugged tract I wasn't surprised that the Opera House Hut in Lady Northcotes Canyon had succumbed to a fiery fate in spite of its concrete floor, stone walls and metal roof.

I didn't need reminding that the Opera House was only one of many huts where I wouldn't be putting my pack down again. But still, it felt good to be stepping out on this perfect spring day. On lower slopes the tree-trunks sported beards and manes of epicornic growth, while the grass-trees had



Trevor Lewis

took up bushwalking in his high school days in Canberra, partly to compensate for his failure to excel in conventional sports. He now has no regrets that he didn't make the 'headmaster's 11' as he looks back on three decades of enriching experiences in locales ranging from Canberra's backyard back country to 'Tasmanian wilderness, the New Zealand Alps, the Himalayas and South Africa.

with these special places—even though it might seem heartbreaking at times. I'd need to focus on the rebirth and regeneration, or even train myself to see the beauty in destruction. I knew that I could look forward to a freedom to roam in areas where heavy scrub had put off all but the hardest walkers. I could anticipate discovering something new in the bare-bones shape and structure of the country that I thought I knew so well. I could hope to retrace old tracks and song lines long buried by vegetation. Even though the Namadgi and Snowy Mountains that I'd grown up with had gone for ever, the journey would continue. ●

PADDLING PARADISE

ISLAND

Sea kayaking Queensland's Moreton Bay, by *Simon Collyer*



Hopping



Above, Horseshoe Bay, Peel Island. David Loveridge. **Left,** heading for St Helena. Simon Collyer

WHY IS ISLAND EXPLORATION SO ALLURING?

There is the promise of the known, such as peaceful, sandy beaches and abundant wildlife. But there is also the prospect of discovery, of finding remains from the past—the ruins of an old convict prison or a leper colony. When you are exploring in a sea kayak, the knowledge that you are equipped to outlast wind and rain gives you an under-

sandy islands of Stradbroke and Moreton provide a protective barrier that make the area perfect for sea-kayaking forays. Moreton Bay once had a dugong-oil processing station and a whaling station; now it has Marine Parks and enticing, uninhabited islands with empty, sandy beaches.

Unlike Flinders's 25-ton, converted longboat, we used 30 kilogram, plastic sea

The Great Sand Islands

The Great Sandy region stretches from Byron Bay, New South Wales, to the northern tip of Fraser Island, Queensland, and includes the world's highest concentration of sand islands. Moreton Island is the only one in the region which has escaped major disturbance from logging or sand mining: it is now a National Park. Stradbroke has been mined but is being revegetated and includes areas of National Park worth visiting, especially around Blue Lake. Peel and St Helena Islands are National Parks. Various other islands are owned by the Redland Shire Council.

■ Moreton Bay once had a dugong-oil processing station and a whaling station; now it has Marine Parks and enticing, uninhabited islands with empty, sandy beaches. ■

lying sense of security. However, we had only warm sun, cool air and blue sky as we followed the route that Matthew Flinders took in 1799 when he explored the cluster of islands that decorate the coast of Moreton Bay, in south-east Queensland.

We roughly planned a route east into the bay, then island hopping and beach camping north through to Fishermans Island, before paddling home up the Brisbane River. The

kayaks—the kind available in many hire shops. They were approximately five metres long by 60 centimetres wide, with retractable rudders, and forward- and aft hatches to give ample stowage. The amount sea kayakers can hold allows you to take luxuries that you could not normally carry. For ease of access we had cameras, sunscreen, maps, compass, water and snacks on the deck in front of our spray skirts.

After a 5.30 am rendezvous, we made our way to Victoria Point for a 7 am departure. We pushed off at high tide in still conditions and crossed the glassy straight to Coochie-mudlo Island. We settled into our homes on the water, adjusting the rudder pedals and checking our gear in preparation for the paddling ahead.

Coochie's sandy beaches were a taste of what was to come. The island has a long history of Aboriginal occupation, with midden heaps still apparent on the northern shore. In 1799, a brave, 25-year-old Matthew Flinders stepped ashore here on what is now Norfolk Beach. He was exploring with his younger brother and an Aboriginal friend on his own initiative, attempting to find a river believed to be in the area. Young Matthew had acquired exceptional skills in navigation from his travels with Captains Bligh and Cook; however, the Brisbane River was not to be discovered by Europeans for another 24 years, and then by three lost timber cutters (see box). Flinders named

Coochiemudlo 'Island Number Six'—hardly inspiring when you consider that he is credited with naming our country. Coochie reverted to its Aboriginal name in due course.

We paddled east, thinking of the sense of adventure that led this young man so far from home. We stepped ashore on Norfolk Beach, now bordering a wetlands reserve, to a view probably unchanged from that which Flinders would have seen 205 years earlier. From Coochie we headed east into the open bay, past Macleay Island towards Blakesleys Anchorage on Stradbroke Island. Within a minute of departure we were treated to the startling sight of a dugong breaching a few metres from our bows. For the next two hours dugong lazily swam around us, grazing the seabed off the coast of Straddie, surfacing occasionally. A dugong looks a little like a dolphin with a cow's head; hence their nickname of 'sea cow'. They are a protected species.

The water was remarkably clear, the turquoise contrasting with the blue sky above.

Dugong

Dugong may reach three metres in length and weigh almost 500 kilograms. Dugongs surface only to breathe and never come on to land. They like to live in larger herds but are now often found in smaller 'family' groups of between one and three due to declining numbers. Males have ivory tusks that are used for fighting as well as uprooting sea grasses. Dugongs are an endangered species, close to extinction.

At Blakesleys we rested under casuarina trees and realised that taping our hands with sticking-plaster was preventing serious blistering. By the time we got home we looked as though we were wearing gloves! Rejuvenated, we set out north along the coast to Goat and Bird Islands. These two are no more than bleached sand bars with tufts of scrub—stereotypical shipwreck islands (missing only coconut palms) surrounded by cool, clear water. This is in contrast to Stradbroke Island, which is dotted with amazingly clear lakes and lagoons full of fresh water. We passed Polka Point, near Dunwich—the site of an old quarantine station with a cemetery listed by the National Trust. It has graves dating from as early as 1847, and was the burial site for the 42 unfortunate passengers from the *Emigrant* who died of typhus in 1849.

From here, we crossed the strait towards the wreck of the *Platypus* which lies off Peel Island. The island's Aboriginal name is variously given as *Turkoar* or *Cheruba* but young Flinders simply named it Island Number Five. Halfway across, we stepped out on to one of the many exposed sand bars for a rest and surveyed the way ahead. We decided to circumnavigate Peel Island anticlockwise and camp in Horseshoe Bay that night. It is approximately 14 kilometres round at low tide and still uninhabited apart from a lone National Parks ranger. We paddled to a protected zone on the north

side where fishing is prohibited. This area has the highest diversity of coral species inside Moreton Bay and the reefs are spectacular. We spotted many turtles before coming ashore at a landmark known as the Bluff. We dragged our kayaks over 40 metres of mangrove-root-pocked mud, some of which came up to our knees, to a barnacle-encrusted stump to which we tied the kayaks. We climbed the Bluff and were fortunate enough to encounter the ranger. He explained that the dilapidated buildings dotted among the trees were the remains of a leprosy colony abandoned as recently as

the two-person tent as well. Try making that mistake with a rucksack!

That night we left the tent open, lulled to sleep by the sound of the water lapping on the beach below. A nightcap helped too, but the sounds and sights were magical. I woke on a few occasions, opening my eyes just wide enough to appreciate the view and the soothing peace of the bay that was just in front of the tent.

Thirty-five kilometres of paddling took its toll. We slept until well after dawn, waking to find a few bleached yachts idling into the Bay in preparation for Fathers' Day. The



The leprosarium on Peel Island.
Collyer

the 1960s. In those days leprosy was considered dangerously contagious and even family members with unrelated skin diseases were exiled here. They lived in small, robust cabins with little verandas—in beautiful but very isolated surrounds—with what would now be million-dollar views of the Bay. According to the ranger, some ex-residents are living normally in the Brisbane community today. Many of the cabins have serious white-ant damage but are soon to be restored by National Parks. We returned to the kayaks and were glad that we had secured them—they were floating on the incoming tide!

From the Bluff we continued west, then south round the island, avoiding a lengthy trip round a sand spit by carrying the boats over it. (Comfortable handles on the kayaks' bows allow you to pick them up easily, one a side, and carry them over such obstacles.) As the sun faded into an orange haze on the horizon we made camp on a low, shaded sand-dune overlooking the turquoise waters of Horseshoe Bay. We appreciated the amount of equipment that could be taken in sea kayaks—we had a large, three-person tent for two of us, and even some canned food. When we unpacked at the end of the trip we found we'd inadvertently packed

Matthew Flinders

In 1770, from the *Endeavour*, Joseph Banks noted discolouration of the water inside Moreton Bay and deduced that a large river was in flood. It took another 53 years for Europeans to find that river. In 1799, a 25-year-old Matthew Flinders, his younger brother Samuel and Bongaree, an Aborigine from Broken Bay, set out on an unsuccessful mission to find it. Even though he was based in Australia for only eight years, Matthew Flinders mapped Moreton Bay, circumnavigated the continent, proved that Tasmania was an island and named the country. He died aged 40, broken by his long imprisonment by the French on Mauritius after he was captured on his voyage home to England.

The location of the river was not discovered by Europeans for another 24 years. In 1823 three seagoing timber cutters from Sydney—Parsons, Phamphlett and Finnegan—were blown off course, washed up on Stradbroke Island and cared for by local Aborigines. Oxley arrived later that year and rescued them. They led him to the river.

next challenge was to make it to St Helena. In a breakfast planning-session, we resolved to break the journey at King and Green Islands on the way. No prizes for guessing what young Matthew named these islands—Numbers Two, Three and Four!

Setting out for St Helena was exciting—if a little daunting—as we were navigating towards an empty horizon. There was great comfort in the thought that we had everything we could need stored safely below deck, available should we be forced to change our plans. This was a distinct possibility due to the notorious, fickle weather. Two weeks before we had postponed our trip due to 33-knot winds and two metre waves. Moreton Bay is known for its shifting sand, shoal water and mud banks and bad weather had been responsible for many shipwrecks in the past.

for a closer look. This was the most difficult part of the trip as both the wind and the tide were against us. The decks got a good wash and it was a constant battle to keep pointed into the wind. It was slow going but we eventually reached Green Island at low tide, only to find that the sandy beaches were a 200 metre walk over mud and sharp rocks. We gained an appreciation for wet-suit boots over the course of the trip! King and Green Islands are both uninhabited but popular with boaters visiting from the Wynnum-Manly area.

From Green Island we crossed over the shark-infested channel that acted as razor wire for St Helena when it was a notorious convict prison. It was named

after the famous prison island that held Napoleon in exile off the African coast, and was used as a penal settlement for 65 years, from 1867–1932. It is now a National Park.

The buildings had been built from weak, coral-based blocks that did not age well. Some ruins remained as reminders of the harsh convict lifestyle, although I expect the residents would have preferred the climate to that of Port Arthur. We explored some of the ruins and practised some Eskimo rolls off shore. In hindsight, it was not a good choice of location.

Despite plenty of spare supplies, we decided to use the tide on the Brisbane River to carry us up to the suburbs and home. We packed up, and as the sun set we crossed towards Fishermans Island. This was open water and heading at a diagonal to the waves required a constant struggle with the rudder. After our farcical roll practice we were nervous, conscious of the need to stay upright in the deep water. The thought of trying to right and bail a laden sea kayak in rough seas was very motivating!



After an hour of paddling, a grey shadow appeared on the horizon near where St Helena should be. Soon after, we could distinguish King and Green Islands a good deal closer to the west. An 'eco tours' boat materialised behind us and we realised that we were being accompanied by a pod of dolphins. It's almost impossible to go out into the bay without seeing dolphins, sleek, graceful, and not afraid to come

Simon Collyer

Is an avid bushwalker and protest manager at the University of Queensland. As a child, his family spent holidays exploring National Parks in Queensland and New South Wales. As an adult, he has ventured to National Parks in Indonesia and New Guinea, but most often he can be found exploring forests and islands in south-east Queensland.



Exhausted, and initially working against the tide, we turned off the channel into the Brisbane River where we immediately caught the current that would assist us for the remaining 20 kilometres. At the Colmslie Reserve we stopped to switch on headlamps and I sat on the pontoon admiring my vessel. Our lightweight steeds had taken the trip in their stride, carrying us 75 kilometres to ten islands. There had been no need to worry about fuel, breakdowns, or running out of supplies; no problems with sand bars or scaring off the wildlife. At Bulimba, in the dark, we prised our salt-encrusted, stiff bodies from our kayaks for the last time.

In the shower that night I recalled a documentary showing a well-known, wealthy Australian's gold-plated shower taps. I wonder if he'd ever had a shower as good as the one I had that night.


AGE SHALL NOT



➤ HIS COMPANION HAD MISTAKENLY BROUGHT AN UNMARKED CONTAINER OF MOISTURE

WEARY THEM

Two 'men of vintage' reminisce as they ski
in Kosciuszko National Park, by Rowhan Marshall



A DEEP SENSE OF CONTENTMENT ENVELOPED me as I glided rhythmically across the softening afternoon snow, each effortless stride moving us further away from our hectic, information-driven world and into the embrace of the Jagungal wilderness. Two weeks without fresh snowfalls threatened to compromise our wilderness experience as we clattered over the corrugations of frozen tracks left by previous skiing parties.

I glanced tentatively over my shoulder; Mark acknowledged our progress with a satisfied grin. Mark's family commitments and my years in the Northern Territory meant that we had not been back-country skiing together for nearly a decade. The coming week could prove interesting for a pair of forty-plus veterans. Our intention was to ski from the northern section of Kosciuszko National Park, near Round Mountain, through to Thredbo Village in the south.

The snow-cloaked massif of Mt Jagungal dominated the southern skyline, a watchful sentinel presiding over this unique alpine wilderness. The freedom and exhilaration of our downhill glide was abruptly halted when Mark's considerable momentum was interrupted by a deep snowdrift. His 20 kilogram pack followed the well-established laws of physics and he plunged face forward. Blood seeped slowly down his grazed forehead and nose, contrasting vividly with the freshly moulded snow. Fortunately, the wounds were superficial, leaving unique souvenirs for the rest of the trip. Clattering along the hardening crust, we arrived at a small, rocky knoll near Derschkos Hut at the foot of Mt Jagungal. We pitched

our tent and basked in the late afternoon light, the western flanks of Jagungal glowing burnt orange. As the subsiding night air enveloped us, we retreated into the tent and set about rehydrating and nourishing our weary bodies. It was a satisfying and empowering experience, stripping our existence down to the bare essentials—shelter, food and water. A simple, uncluttered lifestyle, carrying on our backs all that we required for the next week. It was time for reflection and an opportunity to re-establish a sense of perspective.

During the evening a full bladder and a full moon forced me outside. As I clambered through the vestibule I glanced at the thermometer on my pack, -16°C. Pale moonlight shimmered off the frozen snow as I marked my territory a respectable distance from the tent. Scampering back inside I donned my down jacket, then fought my way back into my sleeping-sheet and Nepalese-made down bag. The bag was shedding an impressive array of feathers making the tent resemble a chook pen. Informing Mark of the balmy conditions, I nestled into my roost and drifted off into a shallow sleep.

As the sun's welcome rays lit the frozen tent, I peered out from the sleeping-bag at the ice-crystal display above my head. Everything was frozen including our toothpaste and we were still 600 metres below the summit of Mt Kosciuszko!

Fortified with sweet milk tea and a bowl of fruit porridge, we broke camp and set out towards the south-west ridge of Mt Jagungal. Skiing across the headwaters of the Tooma River,

Beauty and the beasts; the veterans' idea of a celebration on top of Australia. Mt Jagungal wisely keeps its distance (on the horizon, between them).

All uncredited photos Mark Lord

we were astonished to see deep pockets of ice crystals. The intense cold appeared to be making these crystals grow overnight. They had the consistency of dried fish scales and were metres deep in some areas, making a dull, crunching protest as we sank through.

We ascended through contorted snow gums, working our metal-edged skis into the ice. Eventually we emerged from the woodland on to Strumbo Saddle which overlooks the headwaters of the Geehi and Tooma Rivers. Gliding down to the frozen Geehi, we selected a small, rocky knoll on which to have lunch and dry our sweat-soaked socks. Refreshed, we crested a small saddle then skied on to the ice-covered Valentine Creek. Melt water could be heard gushing furiously beneath the ice, bringing back vivid memories of a previous trip into this region. One of our party had broken through the frozen river, his skis and a swift current trapping his legs beneath the ice. I initially tried to assist with my skis off and promptly fell through to my knees. Retreating, I donned my skis and tentatively edged out on to the dubious ice-cover, eventually dragging him out from the icy torrent with his skis still attached. We had spent the rest of the morning drying out around the glowing pot-belly stove at Valentine Hut.

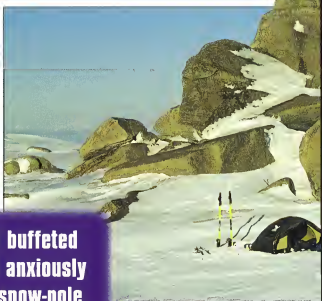
We entered the open expanse around the headwaters of Valentine Creek; the flanks of the snow-plastered Kerries gradually receded as we crossed over the watershed and saw the isolated stand of snow gums that shelter Tin Hut. We hustled inside, grateful to escape from the reflective heat of another clear, windless day. Late in the afternoon two other parties arrived from Munyang Power Station, deciding to pitch

their tents amongst the shelter of the surrounding snow gums.

Our in-house entertainment, a rotund broad-toothed rat, emerged from its comfortable lair, putting on a comical display as it scampered across the wooden floor with a well-used pot-scooper firmly clenched between its teeth. We hung all our gear from the ceiling rafters as a precaution against its intrepid foraging. Our well-fed companion retired from his constant antics late that evening.

In the morning we ascended over the heavily comiced Gungartan Pass. We skied down to Schlink Pass, tentative in the icy conditions, meandering through an obstacle course of scrub and rock. After a steep climb out of the pass we arrived at the Rolling Ground, an expansive, elevated plateau at 1900 metres. I could not resist the temptation of reminding Mark of his last foray into this area. His companion had mistakenly brought an unmarked container of moisturiser instead of sunscreen;

Invigorated by a cold, clear morning we contoured our way up the icy flanks of Mt Tate and finally on to the Main Range. The amazing vistas were compensation for the difficult skiing conditions. The rocky arêtes and steep, icy chutes of Watsons Crags and the brooding mass of Mt Twynam lay to the south-west. In the far distance the white mantle of Mt Bogong stood out like a beacon to the Victorian High Plains. Picking our way through boulder-strewn peaks we traversed down the icy ridge of Little Twynam arriving at the frozen amphitheatre of Blue Lake in the early afternoon. The



“The blizzard had buffeted my body as I waited anxiously to glimpse the next snow-pole, then cautiously skied towards it on a compass bearing.”

imposing granite cliffs were encased in heavy, opaque ice. A dead fox, resplendent in its winter coat, lay by the edge of the frozen, glacial-carved lake, a statistic of the feral-animal-baiting programme. Resting

on our packs we soaked in this unique location, reminiscing about our snow-cave sojourn here many years ago. Threatening weather was approaching so we had dug into a large snowdrift, artfully sculpturing a dome-shaped ceiling. Satisfied with our handiwork we had retired for the evening, a candle cheerfully illuminating the reflective icy walls. A slow drip from the ceiling progressed into a steady trickle in the early hours of the morning as driving rain seeped into our snow-cave, ensuring we had little sleep as we waited for first light.

Skidding down to our overnight camp-site on the Snowy River, Mark had an impressive fall on an unforgiving, icy slope, snapping a ski stock as he executed an acrobatic tumble. I looked down at his 20-year-old Norwegian ski shoes and realised that fashion statements can come at a cost. We set up camp on the frozen banks of the Snowy, then began to fashion a wood insert for the broken stock.

The cold air subsiding down the catchment dropped the overnight temperature to a brisk -12°C, a fair trade for another brilliantly clear, still day.

We emerged from our frozen shelter, coaxed out by the sun's inviting rays. Watered, fed and packed, we

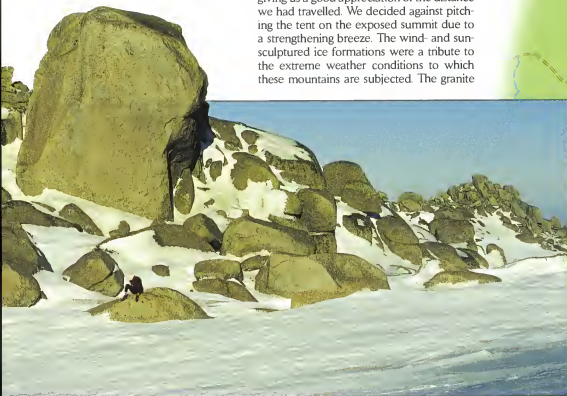
There's nothing like an open fire.

the result after four clear days was not pretty. Dehydrated and sunburnt we skied down to Conssett Stephen Pass, a spectacular saddle perched between the Gutheha River and Windy Creek watersheds. Pitching our tent on the lee side of the pass, we retreated inside to escape the relentless sun. As the shadows crept across the hardening snow there came another crisp, moonlit evening. The lights of Gutheha shone brilliantly, reminding us of the world we had recently left behind.



began the delightful ski up the headwater of the Snowy River, its imposing, corniced banks and clear waters disappearing thunderously under ice. We climbed reluctantly out of this enchanting setting and ascended to Seamans Hut, a solid, stone structure stubbornly perched on the north-east end of

and-a-half kilometres from the hut reminded us of how fortunate we had been with the normally unpredictable August weather. We departed the hut, arriving on the ice-encrusted summit of Mt Kosciuszko (2228 metres) in clear conditions. Mt Jagungal dominated the distant skyline to the north giving us a good appreciation of the distance we had travelled. We decided against pitching the tent on the exposed summit due to a strengthening breeze. The wind- and sun-sculptured ice formations were a tribute to the extreme weather conditions to which these mountains are subjected. The granite



Camp on the North Rams Head. Rowhan Marshall

Etheridge Ridge. Once again, memories rushed back. I had spent four bitterly cold nights sheltering here many seasons ago as a blizzard howled unabated outside. On the fifth day, with my fuel and food nearly exhausted, I had committed myself to a dash for Charlottes Pass. The hut had instantly disappeared behind a curtain of wind-driven snow. The blizzard had buffeted my body as I waited anxiously to glimpse the next snow-pole, then cautiously skied towards it on a compass bearing. To lose my way in these conditions could have proven fatal.

Revisiting the hut on a fine day, I found the gloomy interior quite oppressive. The memorial plaque to the four young snowboarders who perished in a snow-cave one-

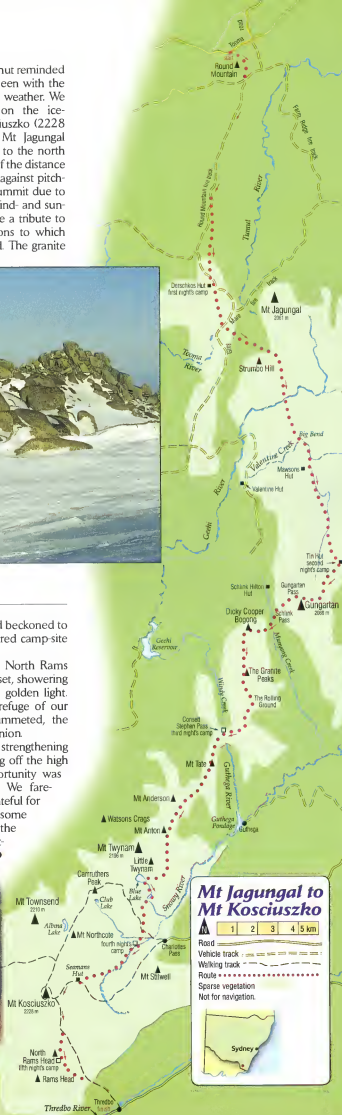
prow of the North Rams Head beckoned to the south, offering us a sheltered camp-site for the coming evening.

Perched on the top of the North Rams Head we watched as the sun set, showering the high peaks in a dappled, golden light. We descended back to the refuge of our tent as the temperature plummeted, the silence now a familiar companion.

The morning brought a strengthening breeze and dark clouds rolling off the high peaks. Our window of opportunity was rapidly drawing to a close. We farewelled our alpine solitude, grateful for the opportunity to indulge in some nostalgia, and skied down the well-manicured trails to the bustling ski resort of Thredbo.

Rowhan Marshall

was in the military for six years before becoming a pararescueman in the National Safety Council. After a short but exciting stint working as a commercial diver looking for sunken treasure, he re-evaluated his career options and completed an environmental degree. He has worked in the Northern Territory as a ranger, and is now a fire ecologist with the Department of Natural Resources & Environment.



Love

IN THE WILDERNESS

Alistair Paton explores the slippery slope on the Crosscut Saw



Potential Husband Test No 1; Danielle Reid puts the author through his paces. Bruce Paton

NO MATTER HOW DISCREET YOU ARE, IT IS hard to get changed with much modesty in a two-person tent. This is made more difficult if the other person in the tent is a girl for whom you have had romantic feelings for most of the past year. I discovered this first hand in a tent on top of Mt Speculation—a sprawling, magnificent peak in the heart of the Victorian Alps—only centimetres from the girl of my dreams, wearing my thermal underwear.

This may sound like the beginning of a lurid tale, but anyone with bushwalking experience will know that thermals are not exactly flattering, at least on men—certainly not what you would wear on a blind date. On my skeletal frame they are even worse. A headtorch's flickering light highlighted an emaciated build that seems common to bushwalkers (only I don't have the stringy muscles—just bone) shrouded in mismatching thermal top and pants as I tried to negotiate the entrance to my sleeping-bag.

And the amazing thing is this: even after seeing what could have been a scene out of *Attack of the Scrawny Skeleton Creatures* (that is, if they were allowed the sense to keep warm at night) the girl in question—who

might reasonably be expected to run screaming into the night—some time later agreed to marry me. You get my point: this is true love.

I had a crush on the woman who is now my wife for months, but was too nervous (or stupid) to do anything about it. She had given up on me completely. Something changed on that hike—and, no, we didn't get up to any mischief in the tent.

I had known Danielle for around a year, during which time I had regaled her with my only slightly exaggerated tales of death-defying trips into the wilderness. She took an interest in these stories, so when my brother and a friend proposed a trip into the Victorian High Country I invited her along. It was her first overnight bushwalk and I assured her that she would not have any trouble, even with a borrowed pack and other equipment (including, if I recall, a five litre water bladder).

Unfortunately, I failed fully to appreciate the difficulties ahead. We were planning to walk up Mt Howitt and then follow the Crosscut Saw to camp on Mt Speculation before returning by the same route the next day. It turned out to be one of the harder

days of walking I have experienced, with the repetitive ascending and descending of the rocky blades of the Saw giving me an impressive collection of blisters. The murderous climb up Mt Buggery (one of the more appropriately named landmarks) was enough to make me wonder what I was doing there, never mind the bushwalking novice I had enticed along.

The saving grace of all this, of course, is that the Crosscut Saw cuts through some of the most magnificent mountain country in Australia, and we were lucky enough to see it in perfect weather despite heading off in late autumn. The Saw is a narrow spine of rock that drops precipitously on both sides to the valleys below. The view from Mt Speculation, when we finally reached it, was possibly even better than those during the walk. Maybe it had something to do with being able to look back along the Crosscut Saw knowing that we had successfully negotiated it that day.

Camping entailed the usual misadventures. My friend Barrett and I wandered off to

“even after seeing what could have been a scene out of Attack of the Scrawny Skeleton Creatures...the girl in question agreed to marry me.”

find water and ended up scrambling halfway down the mountain and back again. In the process we lost our bearings and encountered a sign that said we were now entering a designated wilderness area where there were no tracks and anything that could help walkers find their way had been deliberately removed.

When we eventually made it back to camp, we discovered that my brother had barely started the protracted process of cooking our meal, which consisted of some kind of shredded, dehydrated pork that he had

sleeping-bag when I arrived and proceeded with the clumsy and acutely embarrassing act of shedding layers of clothes.

The next morning we woke to a deep mauve sky and endless valleys filled with clouds. The good weather had allowed us to pitch our tents practically on top of the mountain and the front door afforded a million-dollar view. Danielle found a spot to sit and take it all in while the rest of us scurried around with cameras and tripods.

The sun started to warm us as we packed up the tents and headed back. Danielle led

a shared interest, but I think there's more to it than that.

In terms of romantic relationships, one point is obvious: the tent is one of the great romantic inventions. Sleeping in the bracing cold with only a thin layer of polyester between you and the stars—and any nasties that may lurk outside—is about the best excuse for a hug that I can think of. Undoubtedly some of the best cuddles in history have occurred in tents in the middle of nowhere. I would cite some examples from history but unfortunately trips involving

tents were undertaken almost exclusively by men until recently. Still, I'm sure Scott and Amundsen and their men developed much closer relationships during their weeks in the polar extremes.

Of course, it is true that two people can achieve maximum warmth by lying naked together. Actually, I've never verified that, but it is a great line and one I'm sure many men have used (if they haven't before, they will now!)



Alistair Paton

completed a Bachelor of Arts degree with a double major in history and philosophy, then defied popular wisdom by getting a job. He works as a sports journalist at a major Melbourne newspaper. Whenever he can get time off, he explores and photographs Victoria's National Parks, usually with his lovely wife, Danielle.

Above, 'the lovely couple' taking a romantic stroll at Sealers Cove, Wilsons Promontory, Victoria. Bruce Paton. Right, the 'about to be hitched', second from left and right, and their chaperones Bruce Paton, left, and Barrett Higman. Alistair Paton collection

the way, having somehow acquired boundless energy from the night's sleep and the memorable sunrise.

She was hooked, in all senses of the word. I hadn't planned the trip as any kind of romantic exercise, and even at the time I didn't really see it that way. A week later I asked her out and the rest, including several more walks together, is history.

I wonder now if it was some kind of subconscious test; not in the physical sense, but to see whether she could share my love of the wilderness. Perhaps there were other factors at play which neither of us realised. For some reason, at least in my experience, the wild seems to promote meaningful relationships.

Perhaps it is because bushwalking makes you rely on your companions—in effect, you have to trust them with your life. Perhaps it is simply a matter of discovering you have

And there's no chance of anyone saying 'sorry, dear, but I have to be up early for work tomorrow', or 'yes, I would love to, but can you just move your head so I can see the television'. In fact, because of the distinct lack of things you can do outside after dark, hikers probably hit the sack earlier than anyone, except perhaps those unfortunate souls who have to wake at unearthly hours of the morning to deliver milk or pick up rubbish bins.

But I feel this is a minor point. More important is the lack of distractions, not just inside the tent but in the wilderness itself; no TV, no traffic, no office politics, no deadlines. This allows us to get back to what is really important in life, smothered for so much of the time by things we 'have to do'.

The good thing is that for some reason this doesn't mean we have time to work on getting relationships right—somehow it just happens. The wilderness strips away all the unimportant stuff and just leaves what is important. What is right.

And for that I am very grateful. ☺



found in an Asian supermarket, and an assortment of other unidentifiable ingredients. When we could eat, after another hour or so, it was rather delicious, as hot meals tend to be when you're on top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere.

After a few hands of cards Danielle and I retired to our tent and my brother Bruce and Barrett slept in another one nearby—this was the only reasonable option since we had two two-person tents and before this trip Danielle didn't know either of the other guys. She must have gone to bed first because I'm sure she was already in her

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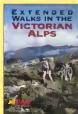
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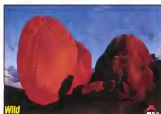
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Wylds Craig

A grandstand view on to Tasmania's Franklin–Gordon
Wild Rivers National Park, by Peter Franklin

WYLDs CRAIG STANDS AT THE END OF THE LONG FLORENTINE VALLEY which once had a continuous cover of huge forests dominated by eucalypts. Nowadays, under the clear-felling regime, it is a patchwork of the stages of forest operations, including desolate areas that look like war zones. Don't be discouraged. Wylds Craig is still a most satisfying walk. At a height of 1339 metres and somewhat isolated from other mountains, it has a view of a large part of South-west Tasmania and north to the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park.

The peak is at the southern end of a small range from where a heathy ridge undulates north to Darkes Peak which overlooks a sizeable body of water. In fact, it presides over two lakes—Daphne and one unnamed—which are cradled by Mt Shakespeare at the north-east extremity of the range.

Immediately below the western side of Wylds Craig is the crumpled maze of thickly timbered hills that make up the Gordon Range. Explorer John Darke had a torrid time on these hills in 1833, and in 1962 two bushwalkers were entrapped in the rugged area for several days before emerging hungry and exhausted. It is a fair bet that very few have ventured that way since.

Further west lies the long Vale of Rasselas, a valley dominated by button grass through which the naturally-flowing section of the Gordon River passes. The Rasselas was once frequented by a Tasmanian Aboriginal tribe and early European visitors noted bark huts, patches of burnt ground and plenty of wallabies.

Beyond this rich greenness are numerous peaks and ranges, many with serrated quartzite tors stabbing the sky. It is a truly inspiring vista and will lead to wishful planning of future walks.

Maps

The Tasmap Wylds 1:25 000 sheet covers the walk described but the northern section of the mountains are covered by the *Wayatinah* sheet.

History

In 1833 the Tasmanian Surveyor General sent John Darke to explore the area known as 'the Peak of Tenerife'. The peak resembled Pico de Teyde on Tenerife, in the Canary Islands—however, the official name was and still is Wylds Craig, named after geographer James Wyld.



Approaching the summit of Wylds Craig. Peter Franklin

When to go

The best time to do this walk is from October until December as the flowers are out and water is usually plentiful. From March to mid June can be nice at Wylds Craig as the Tasmanian autumn is a splendid and mellow time of year. It is best to avoid camping at Wylds Craig after an extended dry period. Trips in the Tasmanian mountains are better if you can be flexible to fit in with a good weather forecast.

Safety

The walk to Wylds Craig is on a track that gets little maintenance; although it is generally distinct there are parts that are not. Walkers need to rely on their own resources as they will find little or no facilities. Early parts of the track were taped and some logs were cut through years ago but very little has been done in recent times. The tape may have disappeared, there will be plenty of fallen trees on the track and some sections may be almost obscured by baueria.

The alpine zone—including Wylds Craig and Goodwins Moor—is subject to frequent periods of very limited visibility so confidence in navigation is essential. All areas north of Wylds Craig are in untracked wilderness country and include sections of thick scrub.

Darke picked Goodwin and Cunningham as his companions—a smart choice. Both were experienced bushmen: Goodwin was one of the few people to escape from the penal settlement of Sarah Island on the west coast and survive the journey through the wilderness to civilisation. Features of the Wylds Craig area bear their names; Darkes Peak, Cunninghams Knoll and Goodwins Moor.

The party made two attempts on Wylds Craig. At the end of March 1833 they camped near Mt Shakespeare when they were hit by strong winds, rain and snow and struggled to get off the mountain. Goodwin, who had spent time out in the weather searching for Darke's surveying instruments, could not speak and with eyes bloodshot and glazed looked 'a dead man' according to Darke. They descended as quickly as possible but Darke's journal indicates that Goodwin repeatedly fell and 'could not rise again without assistance'. Darke also wrote that Goodwin 'could not proceed and wished me to leave him to die'. They did manage to get him down safely. (See *Darke Of The Peaks* by Ralph Gowland, pages 24–33.)

Darke, Goodwin and Cunningham made a second trip during May and June 1833 where they spent a night in wet, dense forest where they couldn't find a spot to lie down nor any drinking-water.

Three nights of rain and mist greeted them when they reached Wylds Craig and they did not know where they were. When the weather cleared they were at the very southern end of the mountain. They packed and got off the mountain quickly. Two nights later they arrived at a camp-site too late to set up a shelter and slept in the open beside a fire. Darke's feet got badly scorched whilst he slept and the toenails were burnt off his right foot. He was in great pain and had to wait for Goodwin and Cunningham to return with a horse from the nearby settled area to transport him home.

Permits

No permits are required. However, during periods of extreme fire danger the Florentine road may be closed. This is a fairly rare occurrence and would normally only happen during a very dry summer.

Access

From Hobart, bitumen roads lead through New Norfolk, then wind along by Bushy Park, Westerway and Maydena. A short distance beyond Maydena, at the bottom of a hill, is a junction with a former logging yard. Just past this you cross a bridge and come to the Florentine road, slightly more than 80 kilometres from Hobart. Head north on the gravelled Florentine road for almost 41 kilometres until you reach the junction with Tiger Road. Turn into Tiger Road which almost immediately crosses the Florentine

terraced steps. It is a bit spongy so you may have to search for a suitable tent-site. This is not a problem at Lake Daphne, but an extra hour of walking is required. There are several open tent-sites between bushes on the level ground after crossing the outlet creek.

The walk

Wylds Craig can be done in a long day but is much less of a rush if two days are taken.

The walk starts from Tiger Road. It is necessary carefully to locate the start as it is not blazoned with a sign, but usually there is enough evidence, such as tape and a rock cairn or two. The track leads up an embankment and is quickly swallowed by forest. This initial section is quite steep and shaded but after 45 minutes or so relief comes at a narrow ridge-top. Here the large ferns are traded for lanky cheeseberry bushes which give off a heady scent in late spring and early summer.

A short way along the ridge is a junction with a rough sign pointing downhill to a logging coupe. This is an alternative beginning and although shorter, it is more difficult to find the starting-point and is still an ugly sight.

The track towards Wylds Craig climbs gently for the next one-and-a-half hours through an open woodland with many large eucalypts. Unfortunately, this lovely forest is zoned as State Forest. It can only be hoped that the voracious appetite of the forest industry does not extend to here.

Gradually the overstorey thins, signalling the arrival of the rampant bauera and other low-growing bushes that have to be pushed through. It also becomes rockier underfoot and don't be surprised to come upon tiger snakes basking here.

Apart from a few little ups and downs it is fairly level walking for the 45 minutes it takes to reach the creek. This is the only creek on the walk and the only reliable source of water after a dry spell. Just beyond this is a single tent-site carved out of the bauera—this spot is ideal for having lunch. From here it is a steady climb during which the vegetation gradually changes. A variety of sun-loving plants appear which are superb in the late spring and early summer.

When the country becomes flatter you have reached the lovely Goodwins Moor and are not far from the summit of Wylds Craig. It is nice to think that this area, along with the nearby Cunningham Knoll, was named after Darke's bushmen companions and not for some colonial officials. Darke also gets a guernsey as the northern peak overlooking two lakes.

The pad over Goodwins Moor as it rises in steps towards Wylds Craig is indistinct in places but usually there is a cairn or two to mark the way. From the creek to the summit takes about one hour.

There is no track on the top of the range from Goodwins Moor to Cunninghams Knoll but it is reasonably easy walking over heathland. Should you descend to Lake Daphne, you will come across some scrubby conditions. If you walk that far, it is feasible to ascend Mt Shakespeare, roughly a three-hour return trip from Daphne. Again, there is no track to the summit but so long as visibility is good, the ascent routes are fairly obvious. The terrain here is more rugged with mixed vegetation and is only suitable for experienced walkers.

The return route retraces the inward journey. 📍

In his late teens Peter was inspired by photos of the Tasmanian wilderness—it was the spark for a lifelong interest. He has bushwalked extensively in Tasmania and is particularly fond of the untracked alpine areas.

the walk AT A GLANCE

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Grade | Moderate |
| Length | One day with a very early start although two to three days are best |
| Distance (return) | 12.5 kilometres to Wylds Craig, 21 kilometres to Lake Daphne, 25 kilometres to Mt Shakespeare |
| Height gain | 1000 metres |
| Type | Forest, subalpine and alpine moorland |
| Region | South-west Tasmania (Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park) |
| Nearest town | Maydena |
| Start, finish | Tiger Road, just off the Florentine road |
| Maps | Tasmap Wylds 1:25 000, Tasmap Wayatinah 1:25 000 sheets |
| Best time | November–December and March–April |
| Special point | The alpine area is subject to mists making navigation difficult on the exposed moorlands |



River. Beyond the bridge the road embankment is initially high and steep but it soon eases, giving an indication of the walk's starting-point. Look for a rock cairn on the right-hand edge of the road about 650 metres past the bridge. The verge on the left is wide and level enough to park the car. Expect to take 45–60 minutes to get here from the sealed road.

Camping

An overnight camp allows time to enjoy the alpine zone and explore the surroundings but good tent-sites near water are scarce. You are most likely to find water on the lower parts of Goodwins Moor, a little off to the north side of the track on the first of the



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Down sleeping-bags

Jim Graham gets tucked in

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild Gear Surveys* is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild Gear Surveys* summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild's* editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and es-

pecially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and especially for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

MY DOWN SLEEPING-BAG IS A CHERISHED PART of my outdoors kit. No wonder—I spent over 50 nights in it last year! I've said it before, and I don't mind repeating myself: a down sleeping-bag should be viewed as a long-term investment, one that will reward its owner with many restful nights.

This survey lists a range of down sleeping-bags suitable for three-four season bushwalking that are available in specialist outdoors shops in major capital cities. A wide range are included, from basic, entry-level bags to top featured models. Each individual's sleeping-bag requirements are different as it is the occupant who produces the heat, not the bag. The user's physical build and metabolic rate should be considered along with the expected range of temperatures and conditions. Most of the major manufacturers provide such a variety of fill weights, shapes, sizes and outer shells that the process of matching equipment to one's attributes and requirements has been made a lot easier.

Seasons

The season rating is an attempt to categorise products according to the range of Australian climatic conditions for which they were designed. In practice this means that three- and four-season sleeping-bags are most suitable for the range of conditions that most bushwalkers encounter although this obviously

At places like the appropriately named Hells Gap (on Mt Bogong, Victoria) in winter anything less than a good sleeping-bag ensures a miserable night!
Karl Landorf



Down sleeping-bags

| Seasons | Shape | Fit | Fill weight, grams | Total weight, grams | Loft | Loft height, centimeters | Outer | Zip | Size | Design | Construction | Value | Comments | Approx price, \$ | |
|---|-------|-----|--------------------|---------------------|------|--------------------------|-------|-------------------|--------|------------------|--------------|-------|----------|--|-----|
| Aurora Australia www.aurorasleepingbags.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hotham | 3 | t | 95/3 goose, duck | 650 | 1400 | 750 | 14 | Nylon | 2, T S | Std | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●● | | 240 |
| Hotham Mark II | 3+ | t | 95/5 goose, duck | 800 | 1700 | 750 | 19 | Nylon | 2, T S | Std | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | | 280 |
| Domex New Zealand www.domex.co.nz | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bushite Endurance 710 | 3+ | m | 95/3 goose | 710 | 1500 | 700 | 20 | Pertex Endurance | 2 S | Std | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●● | | 660 |
| Fairydown China www.fairydown.co.nz | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cobra DryLoft | 3+ | t | Goose | 700 | 1600 | 700 | 19 | Gore DryLoft | 2 S | Std/XL/W | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●● | | 600 |
| Scorpion | 4 | m | Goose | 700 | 1350 | 800 | 21 | Gore DryLoft Lite | 1 S | Std/XL | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●● | | 615 |
| GoLite China www.golite.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Feather Bag | 3 | m | Goose | 500 | 820 | 800 | 15 | Pertex | 1 S | L/Nar/Reg/ S/Std | ●●●/2 | ●●● | ●●/2 | Extremely light. 1/4 length entry zip | 600 |
| Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moonraker | 3+ | m | Goose | 760 | 1700 | 550 | 19.5 | Nylon | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●● | ●●● | ●●/2 | | 530 |
| Pacesetter | 3 | m | Goose | 550 | 1100 | 650 | 15 | Pertex Endurance | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●/2 | | 600 |
| Navigator Dryheat | 3+ | t | Goose | 700 | 1600 | 650 | 20 | Dryheat | 2 T | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●/2 | | 660 |
| Macpac China www.mpac.co.nz | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Meridian | 3 | t | Duck | 700 | 1200 | 600 | 15 | Pertex/Epic | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●● | ●●/2 | ●●/2 | | 480 |
| Tempest | 3 | t | Duck | 700 | 1300 | 600 | 15 | Epic | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●● | ●●● | ●●/2 | | 570 |
| Solstice | 4 | m | Goose | 700 | 1300 | 750 | 17.5 | Epic | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●/2 | | 750 |
| Marmot China/USA www.marmot.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sawtooth | 3 | m | Goose | 625 | 1305 | 600 | 12.5 | Pertex | 1 T | Std/XL /XW | ●●●/2 | ●●● | ●●● | | 490 |
| Helium | 3 | m | Goose | 540 | 820 | 900 | 18 | Pertex | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●/2 | Extremely light | 850 |
| Mont Fiji www.mont.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zodiac 700 | 3 | t | Duck | 700 | 1430 | 600 | 15.5 | Nylon | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●/2 | ●●/2 | ●●/2 | | 380 |
| Alindabella | 3+ | t | Goose | 700 | 1340 | 700 | 18.5 | Nylon/ Hydronaut | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●●● | | 470 |
| Spindrift | 4 | m | Goose | 750 | 1550 | 700 | 20.5 | Hydronaut | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●/2 | Women's version available (Zeal) | 700 |
| Mountain Designs Australia www.mountaindesigns.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Travelite 650 | 3 | t | Duck | 650 | 1495 | 550 | 15.5 | Nylon | 2, T S | Std | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | | 330 |
| Standhart | 3 | m | Duck | 800 | 1530 | 550 | 19 | Nylon/Epic | 2, T S | Std | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | Full-foot zip mummy bag | 400 |
| Comice 700 | 4 | m | Goose | 700 | 1670 | 650 | 19.5 | Epic | 2, T S | Std | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●● | Foot zip. Women's version available (Nanda Devi) | 790 |
| Mountain Hardwear China www.mountainhardwear.com | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tallac | 3 | m | Goose | 625 | 1300 | 600 | 16.5 | Nylon | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | | 370 |
| Galaxy SL | 3+ | m | Goose | 680 | 1400 | 600 | 17.5 | Conduit SL | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●● | | 600 |
| Universe SL | 4 | m | Goose | 820 | 1600 | 600 | 19 | Conduit SL | 1 T | Std/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●● | | 650 |
| One Planet Australia www.adventureone.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bungle | 3 | t | Duck | 700 | 1450 | 600 | 16 | Nylon | 2 T | Std/W/XL | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●●● | Fleece pillowslip included | 350 |
| Epic Bushite | 3+ | t | Goose | 700 | 1530 | 700 | 19 | Epic | 2 T | Std | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●● | As above | 610 |
| Dandelion | 4 | m | Goose | 750 | 1590 | 700 | 20 | Epic | 1 T | Std | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●● | As above | 650 |
| Paddy Pallin Australia www.paddypallin.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Curmobbly | 3 | t | 80/20 duck | 800 | 1500 | 570 | 17 | Nylon | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●● | ●●● | ●●●/2 | | 300 |
| Cloudmaker DryLoft | 3+ | t | 90/10 duck | 750 | 1400 | 570 | 17.5 | Gore DryLoft | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●● | ●●● | ●●●/2 | | 500 |
| Freeling | 4 | m | Goose | 700 | 1400 | 660 | 20.5 | Gore DryLoft Lite | 2, T S | Std/XL | ●●●● | ●●●● | ●●●/2 | | 650 |
| Roman China www.roman.com.au | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Flight Advance 750 f | 3 | t | 90/10 duck | 750 | 1500 | 550 | 16 | Nylon | 2 S | Std/XL /XW/XWL | ●●●/2 | ●●● | ●●●● | Tuck stitching, box walls, new shape | 300 |
| Everest Cap 2 | 3+ | t | 90/10 duck | 880 | 1900 | 650 | 18 | Pertex | 2 S | As above | ●●●/2 | ●●● | ●●● | Tuck stitching, box walls | 430 |
| Endurance 700 | 3+ | t | 90/10 goose | 700 | 1600 | 650 | 16 | Pertex Endurance | 2 S | As above | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | ●●●/2 | As above | 450 |

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Shape:** mummy, tapered rectangular **Zip:** 1 zip, 2 zips, Single zip slide, Twin zip slides **Stee:** Long, Narrow width, Regular width, Short, Std standard, Women's version, XL extra long, XW extra wide and long **Loft height measurements for Macpac Meridian and Tempest and Mont Zodiac 700 were recorded for bags taken out of their stuff sacks and given 20 minutes lofting time. These measurements may have been higher if given longer lofting time. Marmot's loft height measurements were supplied by the distributor f not seen by referee. The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made.**

changes according to where you are. Sim- plistically, a sleeping-bag with a three- season rating would be suitable for use in a tent in autumn, summer and spring con- ditions. A three-plus season rating would also theoretically allow winter camping below the snowline, and a four-season sleeping-bag could trap enough warmth for use in snow conditions. This rating should be used as a guide only, for constructing a short list of products that warrant further examination.

The insulation ability of products with the same season rating can vary considerably when the lower range of outside tem- peratures is approached. The quality of the materials used and the sleeping-bag con- struction make the main difference here. Before buying a bag, construct a short list and inspect each item, checking for comfort, fit, lofting capacity and quality of con- struction, keeping in mind your specific needs and physical parameters.

Shape

There are two basic sleeping-bag shapes, mummy and tapered rectangular. Mummy bags contour closely to the shape of the waist, legs and feet. There is less room for movement inside a mummy bag, particularly for the feet, but they have greater thermal efficiency as there is less air to heat and trap inside. They usually do not have foot zips so it is also more difficult to regulate the temperature, reducing the comfort in warmer conditions. Tapered rectangular bags are only slightly narrower at the feet than at the shoulders and have a wrap-around zip so the bag can be fully opened. There is greater freedom of movement and the bag can be vented if it is uncomfortably warm. These benefits are at the expense of a little thermal efficiency, bulk and weight.

Fill and loft

Down comes from ducks or geese in a variety of different grades. The insulation value of down is indicated by its loft rating—a measure of how much space one ounce of down fills, in cubic inches. The greater the loft, the greater the volume it will fill and the more heat it will trap. Goose down typically has a higher loft-rating than that of ducks although it is also

more compact by using higher quality down. Unfortunately, this also adds to the expense.

It is generally accepted that manufacturers quote the lowest lofting properties of their sleeping-bag fill and measure the loft value to the same strict standards. When this procedure is followed the actual loft value can, and usually is, greater than that quoted in the manufacturer's specifications. In a few

Buy right

- If you have a high metabolic rate you will generally sleep warmer than someone with a low metabolic rate. Cold sleepers may have to choose a sleeping-bag with more fill, higher quality down, a water-resistant shell or a closer fitting shape.
- Make a short list of bags that fit your criteria, metabolism and budget, and then try them out for fit and comfort. Check the amount of room you have around the shoulders, waist and feet and how well the hood contours around your head.
- If you are considering a mummy bag make sure you try one out first. Some people find them too restrictive.
- If you're likely to bushwalk in all seasons, consider purchasing a tapered rectangular bag. This shape has greater versatility and ventilation and will be more comfortable in warm climates.
- Check the type of stuff sack that comes with the sleeping-bag. Compression sacks can be quite useful when it comes to fitting everything inside your pack.
- A down sleeping-bag is an investment that should last at least ten years. Don't skimp on quality just to fit your budget.

a bag lofts, the bag appears to get 'fatter' and its ability to trap warm air improves. It is commonly accepted by outdoors retailers that a bag's fitness is therefore a good indicator of its ability to retain the heat generated by the occupant. With this in mind a sample of each sleeping-bag in the survey was laid out and given a minimum of 20 minutes to loft up. The height that the upper shell of the chest section rested above the floor was then measured. This method of obtaining data is not without error; however, when applied consistently it serves as a useful guide to the potential performance of each sleeping-bag.

Fill weight and total weight

If you wish to keep the total weight and bulk of the sleeping-bag to a minimum, the quality of the down is very important. Weight and bulk can be kept lower without sacrificing warmth by using extremely high-lofting down. Sleeping-bags designed for alpine-expedition use can have lofting values greater than 800. Such bags will also tend to be mummy shaped. Two of the major benefits down has over synthetic fills are the insulation it provides for a gram of weight, and its greater compress- ibility. The general rule



*Top, Mountain
Designs Cornice,
middle, Mountain
Hardware Universe
SL, bottom, Macpac
Solstice.*



cases the values shown need to be viewed with some scepticism as the bags do not appear as 'puffy' as others with similar quoted specifications. This may be due to the use of different methods of measuring and reporting down quality.

In some cases bags are filled with a blend of down and feather. This is shown by the use of percentages (90/10 and 95/5) in the table.

Loft height

For the first time in a *Wild* sleeping-bag survey an attempt has been made to quantitatively compare the lofting abilities of each down sleeping-bag. As down inside

is that the greater the quality of the down, the greater the benefit over a synthetic fill. All the sleeping-bags in this survey weigh less than two kilograms in total, with two models lighter than one kilogram. All weights were supplied by the manufacturer.

Outer

Down's ability to loft and trap heat is greatly diminished when it becomes wet, rendering it almost useless. It will also take a long time to dry. A water-resistant, breath- able shell-fabric is a highly desirable feature for a down sleeping-bag.

Gore DryLoft, Pertex Endurance, Dryheat and Epic are all fabrics capable of shedding moisture in the form of condensation, drips and liquid spills. However, seams in the bags allow water to seep into the down and therefore no sleeping-bag can be considered completely waterproof. A tent or bivvy-bag is still needed when it rains.

more expensive. Seven hundred grams of 700-loft goose down provides greater thermal insulation than 700 grams of 550-loft duck down. It is therefore possible to make a four-season sleeping-bag lighter and

Winter

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Skiing across Murchison Glacier. Image by Kevin Newhouse

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An additional benefit of water-resistant, breathable fabrics is that they offer greater wind resistance. It is harder for warm air from inside the bag to escape and for convected air moving across the fabric to enter. When all other factors are equal, the shell fabrics listed above may add as much as 3°C to a sleeping-bag's temperature rating.

Other brands available

| Brand | Distributor | Contact |
|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Black Wolf | Phoenix Leisure Group Pty Ltd | 1800 227 070 |
| Salewa | Intertrek Pty Ltd | (02) 9697 3415 |
| Snowgum | Snowgum | 1800 811 312 |
| The North Face | PlayCorp Group | (03) 9863 1111 |
| Wild Country | Ray's Outdoors | (03) 5278 7633 |

*Top, One Planet Bungle,
middle, Fairydown
Cobra DryLoft, bottom,
GoLite Feather Bag.*



Sizes

Many manufacturers include extra wide, extra long and women's models in their range. In most cases the larger sleeping-bags have extra fill, and therefore extra weight and bulk, to correspond with their increased dimensions. In the case of women-specific models the shape and length are often modified, as is the amount and distribution of down. Taller women may still prefer the unisex models.

Design

For this rating the surveyor has made a subjective assessment of the design of each sleeping-bag. So far the survey has mostly focused on down quality; however, the way the down is distributed inside the baffles and draught tubes is also significant to overall performance. The design rating reflects how well the combined features could be expected to provide comfort, protection

and insulation when used inside a shelter. Consideration was given to:

- The shape and placement of baffles and dividers
- The positioning of draught tubes and neck muffs
- The placement of zips and draw-cords
- The contours of the bag
- The shape of the hood

Construction

This is another subjective assessment made by the surveyor based on how well the features and materials are combined together in the finished product. Consideration has been given to:

- The quality of the materials used—zips, outer and inner fabrics, draw-cords
- The quality of the cut and stitching
- The use of antislip zipper tapes
- The quality of the down
- The plumpness of the bag as measured
- The overall size and weight of the bag in the stuff sack provided

This rating is not adjusted according to product pricing and the construction rating will tend to be higher for products in the upper price bracket as they are usually made from higher quality materials. As is the case with most consumer products, higher quality comes with a higher price tag.

Value

This subjective rating balances design and construction quality against the price. This rating should assist consumers with a restricted budget. 🟡

As a professional outdoors educator and Duke of Edinburgh Award coordinator Jim Graham gets plenty of opportunities to put his sleeping-bag to the test. It has been used in a range of conditions in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand.

This survey was refereed by Chris Baikie.

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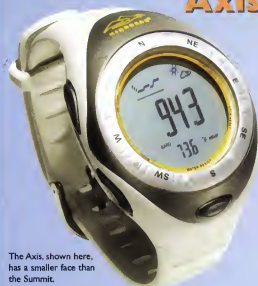
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The Axis, shown here, has a smaller face than the Summit.



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Time



Altimeter

The Summit shows the different display modes.

Altimeter

- Digital altimeter
- Resolution 1 ft (1 m) with working range from -2296 ft. (-700 m) to 29,500 ft. (9000 m)
- Stores 20 altimeter data readings with altitude, time, and date
- User option for feet or metres
- Accumulated and maximum altitude reading

Barometer

- Digital barometer
- Resolution 0.1 mbar with working range from 300 mbar to 1100 mbar
- Barometer pressure graph shows relative changes for the last 24 hours
- Weather forecast
- Barometer pressure updated every minute

Compass

- Digital compass
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- Displays bearing in degrees and cardinal points
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Temperature

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Time

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Dimensions 11 x 8 x 3.8 cm.
Warranty: 5 years parts and labour.

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TREKKING POLES

Four legs good, two legs bad; by **Tristan Campbell**

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

(See box on page 57)

WHILE ONCE REGARDED AS TOOLS of the 'grey brigade' or a gimmick for people who didn't really bushwalk, we are slowly following Europe and the USA as trekking poles become more mainstream. They are among the best ways to extend your walking capabilities, particularly if you are in rugged terrain, carrying a heavy pack or have problems with your back or lower joints, especially your ankles, knees or hips. While in New Zealand last year I saw how the use of trekking poles helped my then fiancée (now wife) get to places that she would otherwise have been unable to reach due to knee problems.

From my experience, trekking poles can also be beneficial for the environment, especially in steeper terrain. Yes, I know that they leave behind small holes in softer ground but unless the terrain is steep enough to make me pack away my poles, I never use trees or roots to help me to get up or down ledges. As such, I rarely contribute to the destruction of a tree's crucial outer layer of bark. Similarly, I seldom use vegetation such as shrubs or tussock grass to help me up or down obstacles. In my opinion this greatly reduces the amount of erosion on walking tracks as small holes in the ground have far less effect than the ripping out of a bush or tree.

Trekking poles can come with a huge range of features, most of them fairly similar between brands. Below are descriptions of the different features, their pros and cons and the criteria used to rate the poles if personal judgment is used. Some features that have been noted in previous surveys are the number of segments and the availability of sand- and snow baskets. Almost all of the poles in this survey are made up of three segments, as are most poles available on the Australian market. This generally enables

them to pack down to a smaller size. Sand and/or snow baskets are included in the retail price of all poles surveyed. Replacement parts (straps, baskets, locking screws) are also available for most poles.

Minimum and maximum length

The figures here are the minimum length of the pole when fully collapsed and the maximum functional length when using the pole. The minimum length can be important if looking for a pole that stows away easily, either in luggage or on



Trekking poles are fantastic for probing the depth of mud before you walk on it.

Andrew Davison

Weight

The weight given is for a single pole (not including sand- or snow baskets) as supplied by the manufacturer. Weight is generally not a major consideration when buying a trekking pole unless you are looking for a fast-and-light approach to your equipment, in which case you can save up to 90 grams a pole.

Black Diamond Contour (top), Gabel Classic Plus, Jacko Prostar, Leki Super Makalu Cortec Antishock Positive Angle (Would you like fries with that?), Leki Sport Atlas, MSR Overland Carbon, Petzl Galaxy Trek.

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the side of a day pack. Poles can be made easier to pack by taking the segments apart and stowing them separately.

Antishock

Most manufacturers make poles with and without this feature. Antishock is usually supplied by a spring inside the pole itself but other types exist such as a small section of rubber in the top section of the pole or having elastic built into the strap.

Buy right

- The best advice that I can give for buying poles is to get two. While one makes a big difference, having a pair is better in terms of your walking rhythm, leg strain reduction and increased balance on unstable terrain.
- The main things to consider when choosing a trekking pole are its expected use and whether it's worth spending extra money on better quality or features. It comes down to a few simple points: will you be using the pole extensively or on occasional weekend or week-long trips? If the former, I would recommend a more durable pole as it should last you longer.
- The other factor is how comfortable the poles are while walking. Do you prefer the feel of the angled handgrips? Does the extra packed length that this causes matter? If you have wrist problems or will be walking on hard/rocky terrain you should seriously consider purchasing poles with antishock.
- Take the poles for a walk around the shop; play with them. The best way to test them is to take them for a proper walk—some retailers have poles for hire, so ask about this as well. Find the pole that is most comfortable for you and will be durable enough for your level of use.

An antishock system in a pole reduces the amount a walker's wrists are jarred and I can say from personal experience that it can make a big difference, especially on rocky terrain. However, if you are on extremely steep terrain and/or carrying a heavy pack you have to compress the antishock before you can actually push yourself up or brace yourself with the pole which can be a waste of energy. As a result, some manufacturers are phasing out antishock on their 'serious' models. Other manufacturers do not make poles with antishock at all.

Like other trekking pole features, antishock depends on personal preference and the most likely use for the poles.

Angled handgrip

There are two main types of handgrips, straight and positive angled. Straight grips are basically cork or rubber grips on the top of the shaft. Positive-angled grips lean forward from the shaft, generally between seven and 15 degrees, and are intended to make pole use easier on the wrists. However,

angled handgrips increase the minimum size of the pole as they can't be collapsed right to the top of the handgrip.

Personally, I prefer a straight handgrip as when I walk, the poles never come much in front of my feet so the handgrips are at an angle anyway. However, most people don't do this and they find that the angled grips are more comfortable while walking.

Shaft material

Shaft material is an important consideration. The poles in the survey have three types of shafts: aluminium, titanium and carbon. The cost of poles often reflects the performance of the shaft material. Aluminium is the most common material and tends to be a light-weight and relatively strong option. Titanium is considered to be a stronger, lighter alternative and provides excellent energy return

to the walker. Carbon, often used in high-end cross-country ski poles, gives a great deal of energy back to the user and also has some shock-absorbing qualities. It is, however, not as strong as other materials, particularly in the event of a fall.

WHILE ONCE REGARDED AS TOOLS OF THE 'GREY BRIGADE' OR A GIMMICK FOR PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T REALLY BUSHWALK, ...TREKKING POLES [ARE BECOMING] MORE MAINSTREAM.

Pole tips

One of the important features of a trekking pole over a telescopic ski pole are the tungsten 'carbide' pole tips. Most telescopic ski poles have steel tips which are very durable

but carbide tips provide bite on hard surfaces such as rock. Consider your common walking areas—if you scramble over rocky areas such as those found in the Grampians or Budawang's the added performance of carbide tips would be appreciated.

Durability

This is mostly a measure of the strength of the poles. The materials used are of greatest importance here (titanium, carbon fibre and/or grade of aluminium). I have also assessed the poles in terms of how much they flex, how well the locking mechanism works and the quality of the other materials used in areas such as handgrips and pole tips.

Value

This is a relative assessment of the value for money that you get from each pole. The main factor is the number of features present, such as antishock, angled handgrips and the shaft and tip materials. Most manufacturers supply a range of poles, with the midpriced poles generally rating the highest.

Trekking poles

| | Weight, grams | Minimum-maximum length, centimetres | Antishock | Angled handgrip | Shaft material | Pole tips | Durability | Value | Comments | Approx price, \$ |
|--|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------|-----------|------------|-------|--|------------------|
| Black Diamond Italy www.bdel.com | | | | | | | | | | |
| Access | 305 | 64-143 | N | N | Al | TC | ●● | ●●● | FlickLock adjustment, rubber/cork composite grip | 60 |
| Contour | 240 | 73-137 | N | Y | Al | TC | ●●● | ●●● | FlickLock adjustment, ergonomic foam grip | 80 |
| Ascent | 255 | 70-137 | Y | N | Al | TC | ●●●● | ●●●● | FlickLock adjustment, cork grip | 100 |
| Gabel Italy www.gabel.net | | | | | | | | | | |
| New Art | 285 | 64-143 | N | N | Al | TC | ●● | ●●●● | | 110/pair |
| Classic Plus | 285 | 68-143 | Y | N | Al | TC | ●● | ●●● | | 150/pair |
| Crosswalk Photo | 260 | 67-147 | N | N | Al | TC | ●● | ●●● | Foam handle with wooden knob and camera mount | 90 |
| Jacko Taiwan www.jackopoles.com | | | | | | | | | | |
| Classic | 325 | 64-135 | N | N | Al | S | ●●● | ●●●● | | 55 |
| Prostar | 310 | 71-145 | Y | Y | Al | TC | ●●●● | ●●●● | | 75 |
| Royal | 330 | 76-146 | Y | N | Al | TC | ●●● | ●●● | Beech-wood knob and camera mount | 85 |
| Leki www.leki.com | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wanderfreund Antishock | 310 | 75-135 | Y | N | Al | TC | ●●● | ●●● | Ergonomically designed grip | 115 |
| Super Makalu Cortec Antishock Positive Angle | 300 | 80-140 | Y | Y | Al | TC | ●●●● | ●●● | | 250/pair |
| Makalu Ultralite Air Ergo Antishock Positive Angle | 265 | 76-135 | Y | Y | Ti | TC | ●●●● | ●●● | | 270/pair |
| Lekispot Czech Republic www.lekispot.cz | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ergo Pro | 265 | 77-145 | N | Y | Al | TC | ●1/2 | ●1/2 | Duo rubber grip | 90 |
| Walker Absorber | 305 | 70-145 | Y | N | Al | TC | ●1/2 | ●● | Soft grip with automatic strap | 100 |
| Atlas | 260 | 62-130 | Y | N | Al | TC | ●1/2 | ●● | Cork grip, flexible automatic strap | 120 |
| MSR Austria www.mountain-limitsafetyresearch.com | | | | | | | | | | |
| Denali II | 235 | 81-141 | N | Y | Al | S | ●●● | ●●● | Nylon handgrips | 100 |
| Denali III | 265 | 66-145 | N | Y | Al | S | ●●●● | ●●● | Dual-density, rubber handgrips | 120 |
| Overland Carbon | 240 | 65-140 | Y | Y | C | TC | ●●●● | ●● | Full carbon-fibre, antishock wrist straps | 240 |
| Petzl Chariot Czech Republic www.petzlchariot.com | | | | | | | | | | |
| Galaxy Compact | 265 | 60-130 | N | N | Al | TC | ●●● | ●●● | | 75 |
| Galaxy Trek | 310 | 80-145 | N | Y | Al | TC | ●●● | ●●●● | | 85 |

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Shaft material: Aluminium, Carbon, Titanium Pole tip: TC tungsten carbide, S steel The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Other brands available

| Brand | Distributor | Contact |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|
| Life-Link | LA Imports | (02) 9913 7155 |
| Salewa | Intertrek | (02) 9697 3415 |
| Tracks | Spelean | (02) 9966 9800 |

Comments

Any specific features that are found on the pole will be listed here, such as camera mounts and different locking mechanisms. Most manufacturers use an expanding plastic screw for a locking mechanism—exceptions are noted. This column also includes details of the materials used if provided by the supplier.

Price

Unless stated otherwise, this is the recommended retail price of a single pole, as provided by the manufacturer. Some manufacturers only sell their poles in pairs and this is stated. The price may vary from shop to shop.

Tristan Campbell has used trekking poles to bushwalk and climb across most of the southern half of Australia and New Zealand. He is currently working in the environmental field, primarily assisting in a range of salinity and groundwater research projects.

This survey was refereed by Nick Byrne.

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MYO

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MYO



MYO 3



MYO 5 Belt



MYO 5

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The MYO 3 is for users who need to switch between distance vision and long-duration close-up vision.

The MYO 5 is for users who additionally require a wide range of adjustment in terms of intensity and duration of lighting.

The Bolt models are for users looking to reduce the weight carried on the head, or wanting a lamp for use in cold conditions.

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A cosy night in

Therm-a-Rest has a new range of **self-inflating sleeping-mats** that are claimed to weigh less and pack smaller than any similar mats. The **ProLite 4** is a four-season mat available in three sizes with the short version said to weigh only 482 grams. The mats have a non-slip base and are priced from \$189. The **Z-Lite** closed-cell **foam mat** is a high-tech alternative to your blue foam version and folds flat, accordion style. The foam is cut to resemble an egg carton—good news for those who like multipurpose gear. RRP from \$69. For more information about the Therm-a-Rest range, contact **Spelean** on (02) 9966 9800.

InsulMat has released a couple of **self-inflating mats** designed specifically for women, with warmer foot sections and more supportive foam in the hip area. The **Max-lite** and **Max-mtn** mats are for three- and four-season use; RRP \$145 and \$159, respectively. They come in a standard length of 168 centimetres, with a long version (183 centimetres) available for the more Amazonian among us. The **Max Thermo** looks like an air mattress but has synthetic fill in the tubes, apparently giving

it a three-season rating and eliminating the need for a pump. The full-length mat is claimed to be over six centimetres thick and to weigh 650 grams. Contact **Sea to Summit** for further details; phone 1800 787 677. RRP \$89.

Mountain Designs has developed a layering system for **sleeping-bags** called **Extended Temperature Range**. There are four base bags in the range and three 'canopy' bags that can be added to extend the temperature range ('a puffer jacket for your sleeping-bag'). The base bags are mummy shaped and have between 600–800 grams of down, while the canopies are available with synthetic or down fills and a variety of shell fabrics. Two of the base bags come with a free canopy. RRP from \$370–800 and \$100–220, respectively. Visit www.mountaindesigns.com for further details.



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Fabric finesse

The **Latitude clothing** range from **Berghaus** is apparently the 'next generation of travel clothing'. The 'children of the cargo shorts' range is quick drying, easy to care for, antibacterial and has an inbuilt insect repellent. The range includes shirts, shorts and pants, for men and women. RRP from \$70. **Phone Outdoor Agencies**; (02) 9438 2266.



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Interwool garments from **Macpac** are made from fabric that has fine merino wool next to the skin and a high-wicking, synthetic outer. This is claimed to increase durability and comfort through both the Core and Mid range. A variety of styles and, most importantly, colours are available. Contact **Macpac** for details. RRP for a top ranges from \$80–150.

PACK ATTACK

Lowe Alpine's new range of **Alpine Attack packs** seem simple yet aggressively functional. They have the features you would expect—ice-axe, crampon- and ski-carrying attachments, adjustable back-lengths and detachable hip-belts and lids. They also have a removable bivvy pad, a webbing belt for use when the hip-belt has been removed, and a design that reportedly stops your helmet from hitting the top of the pack when you're looking above. No more cold bumps or sore heads! The packs are available in 40-, 50- and 65 litre sizes; for more details phone **Intertrek** on (02) 9478 0672. RRP \$219–289.

The **SubXero packs** from **Macpac** are designed for back-country skiing, with ski- and snowboard-carrying attachments. They use a new harness system that is said to make your pack more stable, allowing the user to balance better. The packs come in 35- and 45 litre capacities; RRP \$279 and \$329, respectively. Visit www.macpac.co.nz for more information.

Lowe Alpine's Alpine Attack rucksack.



trix Fire!

Jeremy Foerg finds
another use for
first-aid swabs

Concerned about carrying fire-lighters in your pack or using bits of rubber to light a fire in an emergency? The best multipurpose, emergency fire-lighter that I have come across is a cotton/sapropyl alcohol swab. For weight-conscious walkers, these have a double use, as much of your gear should. They can be used to treat wounds so keep a few in your first aid kit. If the wood is saturated it may take a few swabs to get the fire going but they burn hotter and cleaner and don't drip molten rubber or give off highly toxic fumes.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

"I've never owned more comfortable footwear"

To Stäger Sport

I thought you may be interested in my assessment of my new Meindl boots. I have worn the boots extensively in the Australian bush and in Canada and have never owned more comfortable footwear. Late last year I went up to the sub-arctic to watch the polar bear migration and spent about 5 hours each day out hiking on the arctic tundra, often in snow and ice up to my knees.

I must admit to being a little cynical about the insulating properties of the Makalu and hired a set of heavy felt lined boots. I wore them once. The remainder of the time I wore the Makalu with a light wicking sock under a pair of thermal socks and never suffered from cold feet. Average temperatures were -25 degrees C and the coldest day was -45. My feet stayed warm and dry.

Am I impressed?? You better believe it. You have a great product.

Best Regards
Russ Gately

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Polar Bear photos by Russ Gately

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Feet treat

La Sportiva has modified a model of boots specifically for the Australian market. **Tempest** boots—identical to the Storm model in all other respects—do not have a Gore-Tex lining, making the boots more breathable but reducing their water resistance. RRP for the boots is \$269. **Asolo** has released a range of shoes very different from its standard bushwalking boots. The

further information. RRP from \$150–200.

Salomon's adventure racing shoes are new and eye-catching, especially in the fire-engine red. They claim to use speed-lacing, high-tech out-soles, a supportive 'cradle' between the out- and mid-sole, and mesh venting to produce off-road racing shoes such as the **XA Series**.



Salomon XA Series adventure racing shoe.

Off-road range is designed for high-performance multisport use and has a new, sticky Vibram sole and moulded EVA mid-sole. Phone **Intertrek** for

RRP for these shoes is \$219 but there is a whole range available. Contact **Salomon Australia** for further information; phone (03) 9263 5335.

Knick-Knacks

- * The **Petzl Charlet Snowscopic** is a telescopic ice-axe that doubles as a trekking pole. It has a rounded adze, a powder basket and the length is adjustable from 65–105 centimetres. The Snowscopic weighs 450 grams and the carbon steel point is replaceable. Contact **Spelean** for further information. RRP \$225.
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- * Ever fancied a smoothy or a cocktail when you're out in the bush? **GSI Outdoors** has come to the rescue with the **Vortex Blender**, a hand-powered 1.5 litre Lexan version of the kitchen classic. Now you can have a daiquiri or a banana berry blitz anywhere you have the ingredients! RRP \$139 from **Spelean**.



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New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 145, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: editorialadmin@wild.com.au



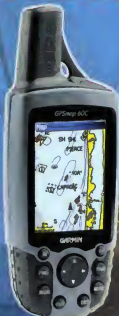
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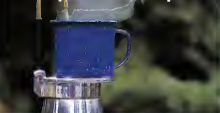
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OLD-GROWTH LOGGING IN TASMANIA



Visit 'the Natural State' for a rejuvenating clear-felling experience! Ted Mead

The giant trees of the Styx Valley have become a potent symbol for Tasmania's unprotected old-growth forests. But the Styx is only one of several wild, forested valleys along the eastern edge of the World Heritage Area—the Weld, Huon, Picton and Florentine valleys are all part of one of the world's greatest temperate wilderness areas. The Tarkine, Australia's largest wilderness rainforest, and many other areas are also under threat from logging (see *Wild* no 91 for further details).

Opposition leader Mark Latham visited the Styx Valley in March, raising hopes that he would commit any Federal Labor Government to a policy that would at least reduce old-growth logging. His decision to allow clear-felling of old-growth forest to continue until 2010 as outlined in the Tasmania Together policy was not the hoped-for result, nor was the implication that selective logging (which some describe as 'patchy clear-felling') would continue after this. Following the visit The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation released a joint statement calling for commitment from both Labor and the Liberals to an assistance package that would end old-growth logging in Tasmania. This package would entail financial support for affected workers, compensation for timber businesses, and assistance so that the timber industry could improve its processing.

In 2000, more than five million tonnes of Tasmania's native forests ended up as wood-chips. Industry and government convert about 10 000 hectares of native forests a year into plantations.

While every other State government has banned the use of native forest for electricity generation, three proposed wood-fired power stations pose a further threat to Tasmania's forests.

The forthcoming federal election is of vital importance to Tasmania's old-growth forests as the Tasmanian Labor and Liberal parties both support the logging industry. Only federal intervention in the lead-up to the election can save the forests, and this will only occur if there is community pressure for the protection of Tasmania's old-growth forests on the mainland.

TWS organised two rallies in Tasmania—one in Hobart in March which attracted 10 000 people—and a series of events in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth for the World Environment Day weekend, 4–6 June. The issue has dominated the media.

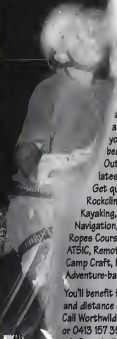
Gavan McFadzean and others

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URANIUM CONTAMINATION AT KAKADU

A radiation leak forced the controversial Ranger uranium mine in Kakadu, the Northern Territory, to be shut down for two weeks in March. Drinking-water was severely contaminated and workers complained of various health problems after ingesting, and showering in, contaminated water.

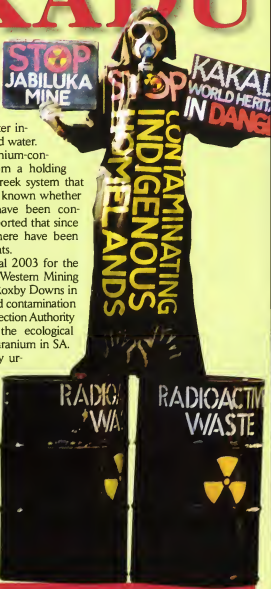
It was also discovered that uranium-contaminated water had overflowed from a holding tank near Jabiru Airport, close to a creek system that feeds Kakadu's wetlands. It is not yet known whether the World-Heritage-listed wetlands have been contaminated. The Federal Senate has reported that since the Ranger mine opened in 1981 there have been more than 110 leaks, spills and incidents.

These mishaps follow a controversial 2003 for the uranium-mining industry in Australia. Western Mining Corporation's huge uranium mine at Roxby Downs in South Australia had numerous spills and contamination incidents last year. The Environment Protection Authority is also conducting an inquiry into the ecological effects of *in situ* acid leach mining of uranium in SA.

Meanwhile, Western Australia's only uranium-mining facility and mine will soon stop operating. The State Labor Government has announced that it plans to extinguish the agreement that covers mining tenements 500 kilometres north of Kalgoorlie. The holder of the tenements, WMC Resources, has agreed to stop mining uranium in the area and to rehabilitate the land.

Eli Greig

Radioactive Man spreads the word in Melbourne. Eli Greig



More sleight of hand from 'the State of self-destruction'

The Tasmanian National Parks Association has pointed out that under the present government the protection provided by the State's system of reserves is an illusion. The TNPA says that, in addition to the proposed large-scale accommodation development at Pumphouse Point in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park (reported in Green Pages in *Wild* nos 88 and 89), it is to spend \$500 000 of taxpayer money to improve access to a private \$12 million resort it has approved for Cockle Creek, at one end

of the famous South Coast Track and within the Southwest National Park (part of the only wilderness World Heritage Area on earth).

Last year the Tasmanian Government was exposed for doing secret deals in support of another large development in the Maria Island National Park. The government recently also advertised the need to amend the coastal protection zone to allow the construction of a motel and other infrastructure at Safety Cove on the Tasman Peninsula.

ONE PARKS LEGISLATION TO RULE THEM ALL

Over the years there have been several attempts to get real and lasting protection for the Australian Alps. The National Parks Associations of Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory are lobbying their respective governments at present to merge the existing contiguous alpine parks (Brindabella and Kosciuszko National Parks in NSW; Namadgi National Park in the ACT; the Snowy River and Alpine National Parks in Victoria) into a single National Park of over one-and-a-half million hectares. As they are all linked anyway this might seem like a simple step but each State manages its parks with its own agency under radically different State governing legislation. Victoria allows cattle to trample through nearly half of the Alpine National Park while in NSW the alpine resorts are within Kosciuszko National Park.

These sorts of management headaches can be overcome by the formation of a single park and a few things make the timing opportune:

- 1 The three States (calling the ACT a 'State' for simplicity) have Labor Governments at present which means they should be able to work together.
- 2 An unusual agreement between the States already exists. The *Memorandum of Understanding* has aimed to establish consistent management of the alpine parks since 1986. This could easily be boosted to a clear *Management Agreement* that could be incorporated into each State Government's parks legislation.
- 3 Management Plans for the major parks are all being, or are soon to be, revised.
- 4 The three States have established a scientific advisory panel to look at effective rehabilitation techniques across the Alps after the 2003 fires. This could easily be developed into a scientific advisory body to give independent advice across borders and management agencies.
- 5 Australian Heritage listing for the Alps is in progress, and World Heritage nomination would be much more likely if appropriate and consistent conservation management were in place.

It's all very possible, but if we miss this chance we may not get another for years. (And we need a good name for the park...)

Phil Ingamells

▲ Act now

Go to www.onebigpark.com for more information and details about how you can help.

New South Wales woes

A new draft Plan of Management for Kosciuszko National Park has been released for comment. It was developed after a two-year period of consultation involving a community forum and an independent scientific committee and will govern management of the park for about the next ten years.

Conservation groups who participated in the community forum are concerned that the plan gives too much leeway to high-impact recreation groups such as horse-riders and four-wheel drivers. The National Parks Association of NSW is calling for a ban on horse-riding in karst areas such as Yarrangobilly and Cooleman Caves. Conservation groups are also concerned that ski-resort expansion at Penrith and Thredbo will lead to the effective privatisation of part of the park and the creation of a speculative market in real estate rather than protection of the environment.

Meanwhile, government restructuring in NSW has led to the amalgamation of the National Parks & Wildlife Service into a new 'superdepartment' - the Department of Environment & Conservation (DEC). National Parks will be managed by the Parks Service Division of DEC. On-ground management is expected to remain broadly untouched although a Carr Government mini-budget announced in April introduced funding cuts which could severely curtail some park management functions. NPWS staff are so concerned at the proposed cutbacks that some have considered closing parks to the public as a protest action.

Roger Lembit

The Razorback near Mt Hotham,
Victorian Alps. David Tatnall

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ERRINUNDR ADVENTURE TOUR, EAST GIPPSLAND

The forests of Errinundra are in the far eastern corner of Victoria and have the largest tracts of old-growth forest left on mainland Australia. Errinundra National Park was created in 1988. It is a strangely shaped park with many wildlife corridors and areas of ecologically significant vegetation not protected—strangely, these areas contain some of the highest timber-yielding areas left in Victoria.

Dingo Creek is a National Rainforest Site of Significance, yet is not part of the National Park despite lining its borders. Forest activists have blockaded Dingo Creek periodically during the last ten years and the eight-month blockade in 1993–94 was the catalyst for the formation of Goongerah Environment Centre (GECO). This is a base for conservationists to work from and the centre supports non-violent, direct action.

To celebrate ten years of activism GECO conducted the inaugural 'Errinundra Adventure Tour' in January. The week-long walk began in the cool temperate forests at the top of the plateau and travelled down the Goolengook valley through crossover rainforest and into the temperate zone. GECO activists were able to show the 50 participants the beautiful forest while

also giving details of the protest history.

The walkers' first view of the Goolengook valley was from a clear-fell logged in 2002. The area had been the site of Australia's, and possibly the world's, longest-running forest blockade during which thousands of people visited the blockade and hundreds were arrested trying to protect it. The Victorian Government spent \$2.5 million stopping these protests to allow 90 hectares of the Goolengook valley to be logged. Many of the guides on the walk had been initiated into the East Gippsland forest issue through Goolengook and it is still an area capable of arousing much passion.

Despite the clear-felling, Goolengook is one of the largest intact forest areas in Australia. It joins the southern end of Errinundra National Park and has many rare animals, crossover rainforest and many species of threatened flora. Government and international scientists recommend that Goolengook should be preserved, yet logging and roading in the area remain major threats.

For further information, visit www.geco.org.au

GECO Media Collective

*Errinundra Adventure Walkers at Goonmirk Rocks, East Gippsland,
Victoria. Shelley Barnes*

Water, water everywhere?

It is estimated that in only eight years' time Melbourne's demand for drinking-water will outstrip supply. Most of Victoria is in its eighth year of drought and subject to heavy water restrictions yet five of its water catchments are open to logging. This includes the Thomson River, the biggest and most important catchment accounting for 60 per cent of Melbourne's water-storage capacity.

Recent findings have shown that unsustainable management of the water catchments has contributed to the low water-level in the Thomson Reservoir. Nearly all the water flowing into the reservoir comes from only four per cent of the catchment, yet figures show that the most intensive logging in the Thomson catchment over the last ten years has taken place in this high-rainfall area. The immediate protection of the water catchments from logging would save around 30 000 megalitres a year in the short term and 60 000 megalitres a year in the future.

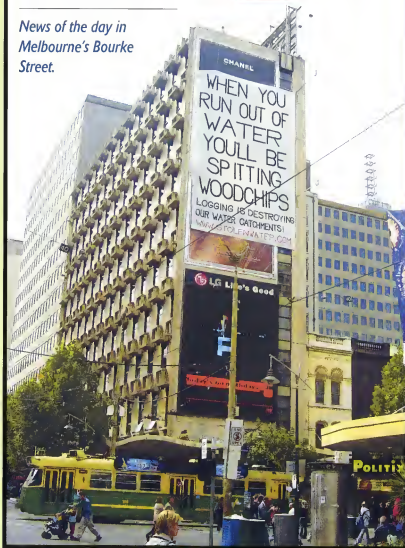
According to Environment Victoria, the city and irrigators take over 50 per cent of the Thomson River's natural flow. In February, the Thomson Macalister Environmental Flows Taskforce made recommendations to the Victorian Government for saving the river. These proposed a ten-year time line, with interim targets, for recovering more water from urban water users, farmers and water authorities to use for environmental flow in the Thomson. Water savings made in Melbourne would also be given to the ailing water-way. The report did not recommend the amount of water the Thomson should receive although last year an expert panel reported that more than 47 000 megalitres (about 10 per cent of Melbourne's water usage) was needed to save the river.

Megan Clinton and others

▲ Act now

Write a submission to
John Thwaites—for
further information,
visit www.envict.org.au

News of the day in Melbourne's Bourke Street.



Wood-chips

People convicted of **organising or financing illegal logging in Indonesia** will face the **death penalty**, as reported in the *Australian* on 17–18 April. Around 3.8 million hectares of tropical forests are cut down each year, with illegal logging accounting for more than 90 per cent of the haul. The new penalties will be accompanied by an investigation into the widespread police and army corruption that has made it almost impossible to fight the country's illegal-logging problem.

The Federal Government has pledged to give **Point Nepean** to the Victorian Government in five years' time for inclusion in the existing **National Park**. The 17-month campaign to save the 90-hectare area turned into a battle between the State and Federal Governments, with much media attention generated by conservation groups. The announcement in December 2003 came after a private, anonymous donation of \$10 million was matched by the Victorian Government, with the Federal Government contributing \$5 million to the cause.

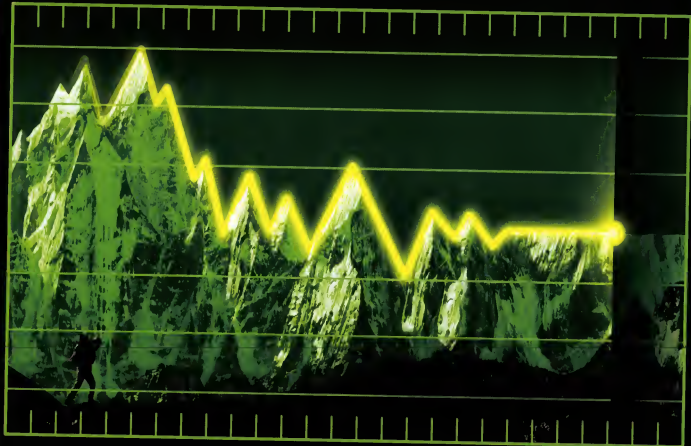
Two substantial developments have been proposed for around **Andersons Inlet in southern Victoria**. Andersons Inlet is protected as it is a breeding area for thousands of local and migratory birds. The proposals are for a 2000-block housing estate with 190 acres of artificial lakes at Venus Bay, and a 900-home canal development with a hotel complex, golf-course and marina near Inverloch. According to Friends of the Earth, these developments would lead to water pollution and a build-up of acid sulphate soils, negatively affecting the local wildlife.

A new **fox-control project** has begun in far **East Gippsland, Victoria**, which aims to reduce significantly the fox population across one million hectares of forested public land. The Southern Ark Project is an ongoing, low-intensity baiting programme that uses deeply buried baits injected with the toxin 1080. This method of bait presentation is reportedly highly species-specific—native animals do not disturb the baits whilst foxes find the baits with little effort. There will be monitoring to ensure that this remains the case. This is expected to lead to increasing numbers of a wide range of ground-dwelling mammals, birds and reptiles. Further information can be obtained from www.dse.vic.gov.au/southernark

Volunteers from Environment East Gippsland recently found three rare, **long-footed potoroos** in areas of **forest scheduled for logging**. The finds should mean that some forest (and the potoroos) are protected in Special Management Zones. 🐨

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email editorial@wild.com.au

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Bushwalks in the Victorian Alps

by Glenn van der Knijff (Open Spaces, 2004, RRP \$32.95)

The Victorian Alps cover a large area and there are thousands of different walking routes. Even in a lifetime it would be hard to walk them all. But where to find track notes for the key routes?

Well, here they are—many of the plum walks of the Victorian Alps—all in one book.

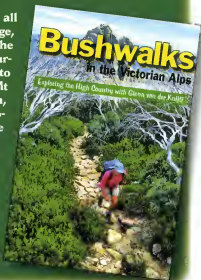
There are photos, maps (in full colour, drawn by Glenn Tempest), even elevation profiles to show you how much you climb and drop in the course of a walk.

Inevitably there are some omissions—not all the Alps are covered. The Cobberas range, for instance, is not in this guide. Nor is the Nunniong-Reedy Creek area. Other favourites of mine are not there—the approach to Snowy Bluff from the Moroka River, the Mt Darling approach to Wonnangatta Station, or even Mt Reynard. But this book will provide the framework from which a lifetime of other explorations may be mounted.

What the book does cover are the key areas—the Bogong High Plains and surrounding peaks, the Bluff, Mt Howitt and Crosscut Saw areas, Tali Karg and Mt Wellington, and the Baw Baws.

Attractively presented and small enough to be included in your map case, this book is destined to be a classic.

Brian Walters



Timbertop—Celebrating Fifty Years

by Mary Ryllis Clark (Geelong Grammar School, 2003, RRP \$70 including p&p from (03) 5273 9329).

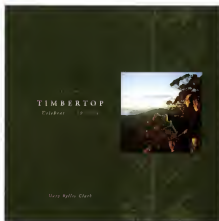
When it opened in 1953 Timbertop was the most daring experiment in outdoors education in the world. Geelong Grammar

Timbertop is now a coeducational campus for 14-year-olds (formerly form three, now year nine) and has 209 students. But Timbertop indisputably remains at the forefront of its field.

While the bushwalking ('hiking') programme has been somewhat reined in in recent years, Timbertop students have recorded some remarkable efforts. These include a weekend walk taking in Mts Buller, Stirling, Speculation, Howitt, Magdala, Clear and McDonald; another to Mt Skene and return; and a four-day, return walk to Lake Tali Karg before the advent of roads—or even four-wheel-drive tracks—in the area.

Timbertop is an outstanding publication with the highest levels of research, writing, editing, accuracy and balance, and production. A large-format, lavishly illustrated book, it covers the risks and travails in establishing the new school, its evolution and its enormous impact on thousands of young—and not so young in the case of the hundreds who have worked there—lives. Various aspects of school life, including its hiking programme, are covered in detail and with insight. A 'must read' for all (outdoors) educators and past students, Timbertop will also appeal to anyone with an interest in the Alps. 🐾

Chris Baxter



School sent its entire fourth form (110 15-year-old boys) to a new campus—much of it built by the boys themselves—in the grandest part of the Victorian Alps. Fifty years on there have been some changes. For a start,

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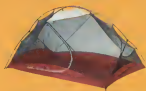
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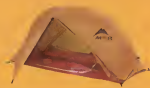
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